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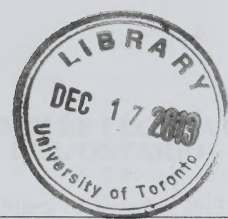
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 10 December 2013

Mardi 10 décembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MODERNIZING REGULATION OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION DE LA PROFESSION JURIDIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act / *Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Barreau et la Loi sur les procureurs.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'll ask everyone to settle in. We're going to go for a little ride down law society legislation.

Interjection: Law Society Lane.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Before I begin with this bill, I need to make some comments about the importance of the bill, in terms of timeliness, and even before I do that, I need to make sure I recognize some very important individuals we have with us today, who have been integral in helping bring this bill forward.

Let me introduce Sheena Weir, from public affairs at the Law Society of Upper Canada; Rob Lapper, the CEO; and Cathy Corsetti, chair of the paralegal standing committee. Please welcome them to the House.

Sheena's not here at the moment, but I'm sure she will be shortly.

There's a certain time constraint that this bill faces. One of the components of this bill is to change the number of paralegals who are currently a part of the law society's governing body and increase them from two to five. The reason there's a bit of a time constraint is that the elections are upcoming. The elections are going to be in March, and if we don't amend the Law Society Act before that election time period, we'll miss the four-year election cycle and it will throw off the spirit of this legislation, which is to increase the representation of paralegals in the Convocation, which would be a good step forward, given the fact there has been the step toward incorporating paralegals into the law society, in terms of registered and licensed members. So to increase the representation would be a strong step forward.

It needs to be done before March so that they can be caught up in the four-year election cycle, which brings me to my next point. We've known about this. The law society has done a great job in terms of advocating the importance of having this bill passed in a timely manner and the time constraints that exist, but despite that, knowing full well that this bill was a non-contentious issue, non-partisan—it's something that increases the checks and balances. It increases representation.

It's essentially a housekeeping bill to improve the Law Society Act. Knowing that, the Liberal government has decided to not give it the priority it deserves. They could have full well called this bill much earlier. The legislation and the issues were all known to the government. It was available to the government, but they did not take the step to actually table it with enough time to ensure that it would get passed. And now, here we are, two days before the end of session, and we still have this bill on the table.

So I implore the government and other members of this House to ensure that this bill passes and to give it the priority it deserves. It needs to pass. It needs to get done. Let's move this forward. Just in case there are any issues or concerns about the content of the bill and whether or not it is actually an issue that we can all support, I'll go through some of the components of the bill and why it's something that certainly we all support and, as the justice critic for the NDP, I wholeheartedly support.

The major components of this bill—as I indicated, one component is to increase the representation of paralegals. The other component is to bolster or strengthen the process in which lawyers who are subject to law society complaints or other issues—the way they're dealt with.

Currently, there is a tribunal, but there isn't a permanent, independent chair. So what this bill would also do is establish a full-time lawyer who would be separate from the Convocation and not an individual who is a bench. That individual would act as the chair. An independent individual would act as the chair of the tribunal. It would establish something called the law society tribunal, and this law society tribunal would include the appeals division and the law society hearing panel.

So, essentially, it would modernize the process by which complaints are heard. It would allow for someone who is separate from the benchers, who are the lawyers that are elected to represent the profession. It would allow someone who is independent from those folks to sit as an independent chair. It would create some consistency in terms of the leadership of the tribunal and the process, and it would increase the fairness and the effectiveness of this tribunal.

So this is a step to support or to ensure public confidence in the profession. It would also ensure that members of the profession can have the reliability of having a consistent chair and having some of their concerns addressed in terms of having a more effective system in terms of dealing with complaints.

Another component of the bill, which is quite straightforward, is that in cases where there is someone who has not paid costs following an order—usually what would have to happen is that if they didn't pay costs, there would have to be another hearing to determine whether or not their licence would be suspended. This bill would also amend that section so that if a lawyer doesn't pay costs on an order, the suspension would flow without the need to have a hearing. Again, these are just steps to modernize and streamline the manner in which complaints are dealt with.

To address some of the issues around privileged or confidential information, the Law Society Act also has a clarification with that piece. It indicates that "privileged or confidential documents or information may be received by the society or the Complaints Resolution Commissioner ... in the context of specified processes." So it also allows the manner to provide some security with respect to confidential documents and information that is received in the process of complaints.

0910

I have to commend the law society with respect to the decision in 2007 to begin regulating paralegals—a component of this bill is the increased representation of paralegals. What the law society did, and I think they handled it very, very well, was that they had to struggle with balancing the concern of the access-to-justice question—of the existence of paralegals, who often provide services that are more affordable for folks who have less means or who don't have the resources to hire a lawyer in some circumstances, and only have the resources to hire a paralegal—with the concern of also ensuring that people receive high-quality legal representation.

In balancing that concern, the law society began regulating paralegals as members of the law society. By doing that, we've noticed that from 2007 to the present, the number of licensed paralegals has actually grown to 5,600. There is a 13-member paralegal standing committee. The paralegal standing committee—the chair is here today—has done great work in ensuring that members receive adequate training, that they are qualified and that they are professional, and I think it speaks very well, in the sense that there has been a clear response that satisfaction levels are quite high from people who have been able to use the services of paralegals. It gives us, as legislators, and I'm sure it gives the law society, great comfort knowing that the public is satisfied with the representation they're receiving.

I think this has been a great step forward. I know that a number of constituents have complained about issues around access to justice. In a society that's governed by the rule of law, our ability to access the courts and our ability to have knowledge of the law or have representa-

tion on matters in regard to the law is really fundamental for us to navigate society. This ability to access resources is a more compelling issue when there are issues of vulnerability—particularly members of our society who are more vulnerable. Those members of society are the ones who are often in the most difficult situations when it comes to accessing resources related to justice. The step to regulate paralegals was really quite a bold step and quite an important step—and recognition of the fact that in our society it is becoming more and more fundamentally important that people are able to access the courts or access the justice system.

Interjection: The government has cut the funding to community legal clinics.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My colleague brings up a great point. Given the climate where there are concerns that are raised by a number of legal aid clinics and other service providers for access to justice in local communities—their concerns that their funding is being reduced, some circumstances where local community offices have been defunded or faced the risk of being defunded in that climate—it becomes even more important to make sure we have various avenues to access justice. So I fully support, and the NDP fully supports, the idea of local community legal clinics that provide services to folks from lower socio-economic backgrounds, recognizing the fundamental importance that if a society purports to be a society that governs itself by the rule of law—and if you could only access the court system or justice if you have wealth, then we're really creating a society that is inherently unjust and unequal. It's essential that we have easy means of accessing justice.

The fact that the law society took on this issue in 2007 was, as I said, a bold step in recognizing the importance of access to justice and the interest of allowing for affordable legal services, and balancing that with ensuring that they're professional and that they're high-quality.

One of the other housekeeping elements of this bill, and it is quite important but it's non-contentious, is that with the increase from two members who are paralegals to five members with the current amendment, those five members would automatically become members of the standing committee on paralegals. That's also another housekeeping element that's non-contentious, and it would just ensure that those five members who are elected would also make up the standing committee that would provide the equivalence of benchers who would become the voice for paralegals to ensure that the strategies around ensuring proper training, ensuring proper continuance of education, continued learning and maintenance of a high-quality membership status would go on going forward, ensuring that the members have a voice and have a say by having their elected benchers from the paralegal community represented in the standing committee.

I just want to briefly mention the Morris report. The paralegal portion of the Morris report indicated, in essence, what I just indicated: "In the interest of striking some measure of balance between enhancing public ac-

cess to justice and ensuring protection for those receiving legal advice from non-lawyers, on May 1, 2007, persons providing paralegal services in Ontario joined the province's lawyers under regulation of the Law Society of Upper Canada."

What I now ask members of the House to consider is that given the fact that the bill itself is non-contentious and given the fact that it will do a number of things that will bolster the Law Society Act, it also would ensure a more efficient, a more streamlined process for complaints, which would benefit the public. It would allow for greater representation for the paralegals in the law society's governing body, and it would allow for some housekeeping in terms of streamlining processes for licence suspension in cases where it's appropriate.

The bill itself is non-contentious, so again, I want to spend some time on looking at what we've done over the past couple of months since we've returned from the summer break. In September, I asked this House to move forward on a number of bills that would be non-contentious, that would be supportable by all parties and that would not cost the government anything.

The government chose to move forward on a consumer protection act regarding wireless services. While that was an important bill in the sense that we certainly support the idea of protecting consumers when it comes to their wireless agreements, the fact that there was a federal piece of legislation that was already before us and was nationwide that supported consumer services and then went further than what was proposed by the province—the fact that that was in existence took away from the necessity or the urgency of that bill. Given the fact that that bill wasn't as urgently required, I implored this House to move forward on other bills and prioritize other bills that were important and that had time constraints and that needed to be brought forward in a manner that was befitting of their importance.

Two of the bills that I had mentioned—one was Bill 83, which was regarding anti-SLAPP legislation. I said that's a piece of legislation that would protect public discourse, that would protect one of the fundamental pillars of our democracy, which is the right to dissent. Again, this government did not prioritize that bill. I criticized the government for that then and I do so now. Part and parcel with that criticism is the fact that we had this issue before us as well. Bill 111, again, is a non-contentious issue. It's something that supports the public. It supports members of the law society, and again the government did not see fit to give it the priority that it deserved.

If we look over the past three months, there was ample time to call this bill forward. There was ample time to give it the priority it required. There was ample opportunity to make sure it made it to the House and was debated in a timely manner so we wouldn't be rushing to get it passed. My father always used to tell me, "You make one mistake; don't make a second mistake by not correcting it." So you made one mistake; now let's correct that mistake by ensuring that it does get passage as soon as possible.

0920

Mr. Rick Nicholls: That's good advice.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's good advice, right? Sometimes I haven't followed that advice, so I apologize for that to Mr. Singh Sr.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We heard from a lot of paralegals during the consumer protection—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes, it was quite interesting. My colleague the member from Welland brought up this part, and I'm glad that she's sitting in the House with me today. While we were addressing this consumer services bill regarding wireless services, we had members of the paralegal community come forward and testify with respect to the consumer services bill around the amendments to credit counselling and debt settlement services, around services delivered by real estate agents and water heater rentals.

The paralegals came forward and indicated that they wanted to be included in the discourse around credit counselling and debt settlement services in respect of—often they're approached by clients, and they want to deal with these issues and people who are in debt and who are struggling to get out of debt, who are often some of the most vulnerable people. They had indicated that they were not subject to a particular exemption or a particular protection or a particular right, I guess, that existed for lawyers, in that if a lawyer contacts a credit collection agency, then the agency has to cease any further communications. What the paralegals were requesting was to be included in that, so if they were acting on behalf of a client and they communicated that they were now acting for this client, "Please discontinue any further communication with our client." Often, the major strategy used by collection agencies is those repeated phone calls and letters. Once you have a lawyer retained, they can stop. But the same doesn't apply for paralegals, so that's an issue that I raised with the House. I know that the law society is here and I think they're very capable of looking at this issue and addressing it, but it's something that the paralegals did bring up. I recognize that their interest is in being able to provide greater service or greater protection for those who are vulnerable, who are looking to get that debt settled, and paralegals can certainly offer some great services with respect to that. That might be an area that we need to look at, in terms of broadening the definition of those who can act in those matters. Perhaps paralegals would be an addition that we could consider in the future. I know that's something that we did bring up and we did support that initiative, but we certainly look to the law society for more guidance on that matter.

Coming back to this issue of priority, we acknowledge that this bill is something that we need to do; it's something that we need to move forward on. I again ask this government, after I've had the pleasure of addressing this House, to please consider what you're going to do moving forward to ensure the speedy passage of this bill. I notice some members of the official opposition are paying attention to this matter. I also implore you to make

sure that this bill does get passage and do whatever you need to move it forward. In terms of our party, we are going to take the necessary steps to make sure that we speed up the process in any way we can to make sure that this bill does go forward and does get passed in a timely manner.

I want to talk a bit about the law society tribunal that would be established by this act and that would still contain the law society hearing panel and the law society bills division.

One of the things I've talked about in this House, and I've talked about it a number of times with respect to politicians, and I also want to raise this issue again with respect to lawyers, is that in our society—I'm sure in your communities, there are many jokes that are told about lawyers and there are many jokes that are told about politicians, and those jokes are often told in good taste—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Now you're both.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm subject now to both of those jokes, which is kind of an interesting situation. But though I'm very happy to hear any sort of joke, the underlying concern or message that I have is that there has been an erosion of the support or the reputation of these two professions. I think that there's a lot we can do to regain that trust in the public and there's a lot we can do to rebuild that reputation.

When it comes to politicians—and I've said this a number of times—it's incumbent on us, as members here, to restore that support or that reputation that seems to be eroding in the community. One of the biggest complaints that I've received in general about politicians—and I thankfully have not been subject to that criticism, but it's a general complaint—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yet.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —yet, and hopefully never—is that politicians say one thing and then do another; that they don't fulfill their promises; that they don't deliver on what they say they will. That seems to be something that we can easily address. Think first, and then assess what you can do or not do, and if you can do something, promise only what you can do. Don't over-promise and don't mislead people. It's for all our benefit. If we can all act and comport ourselves with that level of integrity, it will increase the reputation that we have.

In fact, I think it's no surprise—if you look at the levels of participation in terms of voter turnout and its decline and the increase in apathy, if you compare that with the falling reputation of politicians, I'm sure you can see a great connection between those three issues.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Eighty-one broken promises in 10 years.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I apologize for this criticism, but I think the 81 broken promises in 10 years that my friend from Welland is indicating has hurt us a lot in that respect.

So we can work, as members of this House, to restore the respect that politicians should have, so that we can increase voter turnout; so we can decrease the apathy that

exists; so we can instill in people that their voice does matter, that politics can play an important role in their lives, that we can change our society for the better, that participating in democracy is an important and useful thing. We can restore that trust by doing what we do in this House, by making sure that we fulfill our promises and that we comport ourselves with integrity.

Similarly, and I have a bit of a vested interest in this, being a lawyer, I think it's important that we encourage respect for that profession as well. One of the ways we can do that is to ensure that the public knows that if someone acts in a manner that's unprofessional or if someone acts in a manner that's not in accordance with the principles or ethics that a lawyer should hold himself or herself to, there is a complaints procedure that works, that's effective, that's streamlined. This law society act can be a step towards increasing the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and process. By improving that process, the message it sends to the public is that a stronger disciplinary board that's effective, independent and something that you can rely on—will encourage the public to then increase their level of respect for the profession, which would bolster the standing of members of the law society.

I have a vested interest now in these two professions. I want to ensure, with respect to politicians, that all the members in this House and all the members who are elected across this province and across this country—the degree to which they hold themselves out and follow their professionalism and maintain their integrity will contribute to the reputation of all of us, so that's important.

In the same vein, the more we can do to ensure that the public respects the reputation and the profession of lawyers will also go towards another goal, a third goal, and that's—again, in a society based on the rule of law, the citizens' support for or faith in the administration of justice is integral in creating a vibrant democracy. If the public feels that the administration of justice is broken, is not able to deliver fair results and is not able to provide good legal representation—if the members that helped deliver and helped navigate the rule of law or navigate the legal landscape are not acting to a high level of professionalism, a high level of integrity—then it erodes not only the respect that they have for those individuals, but it also erodes the respect for the administration of justice, broadly speaking.

0930

We started off at a law society act that amends some key components, but the impact of that is broader-reaching than just increasing the representation of paralegals or changing the process in which the tribunal is set up that deals with complaints. It's actually a question of restoring or increasing respect for the administration of justice, which is important in a democratic society based on the rule of law. If anything, I'm hoping that my submissions or my arguments or my proposition to you would ensure that you recognize, as members of this House, the importance of having this bill passed because

its impact is more than just the sum of its parts. It has a broader-reaching impact and a broader-reaching implication, and I think an important one. That's what I'm hoping to drive home.

I spent some time thinking about just the component around the law society tribunal. To date, there wasn't a consistent chair or head of this law society tribunal—not to say that they weren't effective. The participation of the law society tribunal that the previous form of this complaints hearing board was, members of the benchers were being part of that—not to say that there was any problem with it, but in terms of having a consistent chair and a chair that's independent from the benchers, in terms of the appearances, it's much more independent, it's much more reliable and it's much more effective, I think, in terms of a process. What it does is it shows the evolution of the profession. As the profession evolved—all professions go through learning curves and growing pains. Self-regulation is obviously one step. Part of self-regulation is the ability to discipline your members—and as you're disciplining members to, again, balance the protection of your members, but also to ensure that the public has trust in your profession. The manner in which members are disciplined and the manner in which the disciplinary process and hearings go, that's something that needs to develop over time. This is a natural evolution of a society, of a profession that has years and years of experience, history and tradition here in Ontario and, for that matter, across the world. But it's a step forward and it's a part of that evolution of the profession, and it's an important step forward. I applaud the law society for taking that step. Again, I implore all the members of this House to support that.

Turning back to the increase in representation, there are currently a number of benchers. The way the system is set up is that the benchers are selected from across Ontario. There are 40 lawyers that make up the Convocation, which is the sum total of the folks elected, chosen and appointed as benchers. There are eight lay benchers and 40 lawyers—20 of whom are selected from Toronto and 20 from outside the Toronto area. To be clear, the 40 lawyers are elected by members of the profession, and that provides both representation in the urban centre, which makes up the vast majority of lawyers, but also provides representation around the province of Ontario to ensure that the voices of everyone in the profession are heard—and then eight lay benchers to provide the input from folks who aren't necessarily lawyers, which broadens the scope and the vision of the Convocation, and allows the input of people who are not necessarily trained in law, who are not necessarily practising law, to provide their input in terms of what the public is concerned about. I think that was quite an important step, and I think it provides a more rich resource in terms of assessing what the concerns of the public are. The current mandate includes two paralegals. Given the fact that there are over 5,000 registered or licensed paralegals, moving from two to five I think is a good step forward. It still maintains the voice of the lawyers, it maintains the voice of the lay

benchers, but it increases the voice of the paralegals, and I think it's an important step forward. We need to increase their voice so that they can have stronger participation and they can be involved in the development of legal services in the province of Ontario. I think it's something quite important. In case members weren't aware of the makeup of the Convocation, that's what it is. Increasing the paralegals from two to five, again, is not something that should raise any concerns, and in fact should be something that is accepted and supported.

Just turning back to the issue of licence suspension if you're ordered to pay costs under section 49.28 and one does not—again, that's just a very straightforward measure. If someone is ordered to pay costs, what would happen is that it would be a costly and inefficient system where—if there's an order to pay costs and that order is not adhered to, is not followed, there would be another hearing to assess whether or not the licence should be suspended. Again, that's more costly, it's time-consuming and it's essentially—there might be some very rare circumstances, but it's quite a natural order; if the order is not followed, then the licence should be suspended. Though hopefully I'm never in this circumstance and it doesn't happen to me, it does take away one step in terms of a hearing stage. But I think it's something that makes sense in terms of process and it makes sense in terms of increasing the efficiency and reducing time costs. That's a step forward that makes great sense.

In my time given, I've addressed the bill. I think the bill is something we can all support and I implore all of us to support it. I want to turn our attention just to this issue of access to justice as something that's a principle that we should give some importance and give some value in the province of Ontario. I can tell you that in my experience in Peel region, with the lack of legal clinics and with the lack of other legal services, there are a number of constituents who approach me with issues on a regular basis. On a weekly basis I have meetings and people tell me about their concerns around the fact that they're not able to get services in their tenant positions, when they're renting and they're not getting repairs done; there are issues with the conditions of their home, of their apartment, and they're not able to navigate the landlord and tenant tribunals. They're looking for help. I have folks who come to me, asking me what their rights are in terms of employment law, the way they're being treated in their workplaces, the fact that they're not being paid, the fact that it's temporary workers working through temporary job agencies and they're not receiving the compensation that they're due, and they're asking me, "What steps can I take? Who do I turn to? I need to have some legal representation. People tell me that I need to go to court, but I'm afraid to go to court." In most people's minds, if you're not a lawyer, the thought of going to court strikes fear in your heart. It's extremely confusing, and it's something that people are loath to do. Many of the remedies, many of the solutions to people's problems are found in court, or are found with commencing a legal proceeding. If people don't have access

to that, if they're not aware of how to do that, if they don't have the means to do it, then we are setting a number of people at a great disadvantage.

0940

Whether it comes to employment issues, whether it comes to issues surrounding landlord-tenant issues, whether it comes to accessing a service in Ontario like Ontario Works, the fact that if someone is denied a claim—their claim which they rightfully deserve—the fact that they don't know what to do next and that often they need to get legal representation to take the matter further and they don't know how to access that, it's a fundamentally important thing. Really, if we look at what could happen if we don't support this, if we don't address this issue—if we don't address this problem, what we can be left with is a society in which only those who have the means, only those who have resources will be able to obtain remedies in court, will be able to access justice, and we'll have an entire population of folks who are left without any supports whatsoever.

Whether it's issues around co-op evictions, that are now going to be a part of the landlord tribunal and caught up in that umbrella, whether it's employment law issues, we need to make sure that people are not unfairly prejudiced because of the depth of their pockets, or their lack of resources, or the number on their bank account. Those issues shouldn't reflect or shouldn't determine how much access to justice an individual has.

I know a number of members of this House have faced this issue a number of times, and I face it on a regular basis: What do we tell our constituents who come to us and say, "We haven't gotten this service," or "We're not able to access this?"

Ms. Cindy Forster: It takes two years to actually get to court.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Or the time it takes to take the matter—start an action and actually have it then resolved in court. It takes so long. If it's a matter of obtaining some resources, if it's a matter of suing someone for payment that you required or you're entitled to, and you have to wait for years or wait for a year to receive that people are often living in dire conditions, living hand to mouth, and that year delay will mean the difference between actually being able to afford where they're living and being on the streets.

It's something, to me, that's a painful reality. When I look at my personal circumstances, I am very comfortable navigating the courts. If I didn't have my legal training, I would be in a completely different position. When I see constituents come to me who don't have that comfort level, who don't have that awareness, who don't have that access, I feel that they are being severely disadvantaged, particularly because our society holds itself out to be a society that's based on the rule of law, and if you're only going to allow access to that rule of law or to those courts to those who have means, then we're really seriously disadvantaging a great deal of our population.

I've met with a number of legal clinics and I've met with a number of folks who are legal aid lawyers, people

who are committed to addressing this inequity. What they're telling me is that one of the most important things we can do is make sure that in our communities there are access points to justice; that in our communities there are legal clinics; that the legal aid system with respect to the certificates is a system that works. We set ourselves quite different from the system that exists in the States; people who are less fortunate, who are of lower socio-economic backgrounds, can actually obtain a certificate and retain the services of some of the best lawyers in the entire city, in the entire country, through the legal aid system. So our system is far superior in many respects to what we see in the States and our cousins just south of the border.

So in some respects we have areas where we can hold our heads high, but at the same time, there are still a number of areas where people are unable to access legal aid certificates. Often the criteria set are far too limiting. There is a number of people who are unable to qualify, not because they're not struggling, not because they're unable to make ends meet—and they should receive services—but because the qualification levels are set at such a difficult level to be assessed as someone who actually is meritorious or who can be approved for coverage. Because that test is so stringent, in a number of cases there are people who literally cannot afford services, who are being denied. We need to do something to address that.

While we're speaking about the Law Society Act, while we're speaking about amendments to improve the law society, I want to take this time to also address the fact that we need to really be serious about ensuring the government funds and supports local initiatives to provide access to justice, that local initiatives and local access points are in many respects far superior than having a centralized call-in system. I want to speak very briefly about that divide, that in the interests of cost efficiency there has been some talk about centralizing services, providing a central call-in centre where you would call in with your legal issues and have them processed centrally, and get rid of the satellite clinics. I'm fairly certain the Attorney General supports the clinics system. I ask all members to look at your legal clinics and, if you have a clinic in your community, to visit it, to tour it, to ask the members who work there what services they provide and how important it is.

There are severe barriers that exist. If you're already someone who is accessing a legal clinic, there might be other barriers; for example, transportation barriers; you might face some language barriers if you're a new Canadian. There's also the concern of, how can you express your issues over the phone? How can you really get into detail and convey what the problems are without being face to face with someone? Often, when it's a complicated legal matter, you might have received a letter, you might need to point to it and say, "This is the letter I received. I don't really understand what this is all about." You can't re-create that over the phone. I'm making a case for the importance of legal community clinics, that those clinics provide an access point that's close to in-

dividuals, that's in their community. They can access it; they can tell their stories and their concerns face to face with somebody. They also can bring in their information if there are legal papers that they want someone to look at. It also can assist in some of the barriers that exist due to language and the sensitivities that exist where maybe there's something that someone feels uncomfortable speaking over the phone, they want to meet with someone face to face so they can share their story. In the interests of access to justice, I really want to encourage members of this House to recognize the importance of having legal clinics that are in your communities.

The other area that is quite important is that if you look at our legal system, if you look at the way it's set up and the manner in which resources are accessed, there is a clear unfairness that exists. I'll leave you waiting for the answer to that.

Ms. Catherine Fife: In suspense, great suspense.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'll leave you in suspense.

If you look at incarceration rates, if you look at the prison populations, there is a clear indication that in our prisons, aboriginals and racialized people are far over-represented. Their populations, in terms of their percentage or their proportion in the community, and if you look at the proportions in detention centres—is far out of balance. One of the arguments raised is that people who are incarcerated—if you look at those individuals, one issue that you'll see is the connection to race. The other issue that you will see is the connection to poverty, that people who are incarcerated are, in terms of proportion, more likely to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds and more likely to be racialized.

Interjection: And mental health.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Also, another very important issue is their mental health representation, the proportionality of those who are mentally unwell or facing mental health issues—they're far overrepresented as well. So we have these three demographics: racialized folks, mental health issues and folks who are poor—you know, the poor in general. These three groups of people are, no surprise, also the most vulnerable people in our societies. Then, if you look at access-to-justice issues, these three groups of people have the most difficulty, in terms of the most barriers in accessing justice.

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There was a recent report released, in a CBC article, on this issue of the overrepresentation of particular demographics in our community. If we want to be serious about addressing that overrepresentation, one of the root causes is, of course, poverty, and we need to address poverty. The other area where we can address this problem is access to justice. If those people had better access to justice, then I'm sure we could address the fact that they're being incarcerated—with better representation, we could find alternate means. They could be diverted out of the criminal justice system, and that overrepresentation that currently exists would be addressed.

Now that I have a moment, I'm hoping that the Attorney General will pay close attention to this message.

If we look at the criminal justice system and the overrepresentation of particular community members, there's also a trend that's happening in Canada, and I'm hoping that we can stem this tide and can resist this growing trend. When we look at the type of politics, centrally, that exists and the direction in which the Conservative government wants to take our province—we look at other jurisdictions that have learned that a particular direction is inherently flawed and is not working: mandatory minimums. Mandatory minimums is something that the United States has tried, and it has utterly failed. The thought that all folks who are charged with a particular offence should immediately—

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Okay. The thought that mandatory minimums would be a way to deal with reducing crime was something proposed by the United States. They thought, "Let's get tough on crime." Michigan is one of the best examples. Michigan implemented a mandatory-minimum system, and instead of reducing crime, they found that it actually increased crime. Sociologists tried to assess why that happened, and one of the explanations given was that mandatory minimums created such a climate of despair and such a lack of hope in individuals—they were sent away for far-longer periods of time—that increased incarceration resulted in folks who came out of incarceration with less opportunities and less ability to earn in society, and it increased recidivism.

So we have evidence. The problem with the current system, in terms of the direction we're heading, is that instead of making evidence-based decisions, what we're seeing all too often is that governments and politicians are making emotion-based decisions. Instead of looking at data and facts, they're looking at emotions. Instead of using this type of decision-making, I ask us to look at the facts and to make sure that we don't make decisions based simply on emotion.

At this point, Madam Speaker, given the fact that this is a bill that we all support and given the fact that this is something that we can move forward on—it's non-contentious—I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act; Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day; and Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Before we can consider that, the member will need consent to adjourn the debate.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I seek unanimous consent to adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there unanimous consent?

I heard a no. We'll go back to the debate and the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let's just summarize the position that we have here. We have a bill, Bill 111, that's before the House. It's a bill that we all support. It's a bill that makes sense. I implore all the members of this House

to support this bill. I know that, on behalf of the NDP, we will be supporting it. We will be doing all we can to ensure that it's not held up.

We ask the government to prioritize this bill to make sure it does get passed in a timely manner. Everyone recognizes that one of the key components of this bill is to increase the representation. That's going to take the paralegal representation from two members to five members. This needs to happen before the elections come up. If it doesn't happen, just to give you an idea, there could be an election held. People will be voted in. There's a four-year term. It will cause all sorts of problems if we haven't increased the two members to five members before that time.

For that reason and for a number of other reasons, we need to ensure that this bill is passed in a timely manner. I ask you all to do whatever you can to ensure that this bill does get passed. It's something that we all support. It's something that is effective, it's something that's important and, above all, it increases the public's respect for and confidence in our administration of justice.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand today to respond to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act.

You know, I'm just concerned. My recollection is that we asked for unanimous consent. The government asked for unanimous consent last week to pass Bill 111, and the third party did not support it. Now we have the opposition not supporting it. The timing, of course, is extremely important. We all seem to agree that this is legislation that's needed, and we face the end of this week with not having passed it, and I think it's March 2014 that the next four-year cycle commences for the benchers. We've heard there are 50 benchers in Ontario, and this legislation would change the makeup of that. It would be reflective of the paralegals who are in the system. I think it's not great action in this Legislature to agree that a piece of legislation is good and say all the things that are important—it has obviously been done with the consent of the law society—and yet we may be in the position where it's not going to be ready for these changes.

I just ask everyone here to do the logical thing. This is supported by everyone. Let's pass it and make sure that the improvements that will come with this—certainly for the paralegals, not only in the numbers on the law society but what they can do. I urge everyone to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments with respect to Bill 111, both procedurally and substantively.

Procedurally, I think it's important to note that we did ask for unanimous consent for speedy passage of Bill 111 last week, but it was denied by the third party, and it's not to say that we wouldn't agree with it today except for the fact that we were blindsided. We had no idea that this was going to be coming forward this morning.

I apologize to our guests who are here today. I hope that we will be able to work this out, because this is a bill that I do believe we all understand is a good bill and that there are some time aspects to it that we need to adhere to, because we certainly don't want to interfere with the bencher elections that are coming up early in the next year. Of course, it is a four-year cycle, so it really is important that we proceed as quickly as possible.

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I do hope that our House leaders will be able to get together, that we will be able to come to a solution that will allow us to pass this without further delay and we will be able to move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's always good to hear from my friend the member from Brampton, but I've got to say a couple of things. One is, this is a non-contentious bill. This is a really simple bill. This is about changing the composition of the board and getting two paralegals on to the board in addition to what's there already, so that you can have better representation. Nobody opposes it. I don't see the Liberals opposing it. I don't see the Conservatives opposing it. I don't see us opposing it.

At this point, we have a great opportunity. We tried to get unanimous consent. It was denied; fair enough. I just say to my Conservative friends, you moved that motion last week with little notice. We hadn't had a chance to have our leadoff speech, so we needed to get that on the record. We said okay this morning: Let's do the unanimous consent. Now you've said no. I think to the people who are sitting here—

Mr. John Yakabuski: With no notice.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just hang on. I'm saying to the people who are sitting here from the law society and those watching, they don't understand the inter-machinations of this place and just see this as a lot of game-playing. But here's an opportunity. Nobody has to get up and debate after the member from Brampton has finished his speech. If the Liberals don't get up, the Tories don't get up, and we don't get up, guess what? We're done. Then we can move the unanimous consent later on this afternoon if that is what seems to be indicated, which is a possibility.

I think this is an opportunity for us to do what's right, not just for the law society and its members, but to do what's right for us as members in this House when it comes to process.

I want to congratulate the member for a great speech, as always, and I just say, let us do the right thing, and let's see what unfolds in the next few minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Attorney General?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, let me just say that I'm very pleased to hear that the members on all sides agree with the content of this bill. I, too, would hope that it will be given unanimous consent at some point in time. But I also recognize the fact that whatever the arrangements are in this House, they should be agreed to by all

three parties and three House leaders. Hopefully, they will be able to sort this out, and this bill, and perhaps other like-minded bills, can be passed before we take our Christmas recess.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you to all who participated. At least we have one thing—we have perhaps not formal unanimous consent, but at least informal consent that everyone agrees with this bill. I'm hoping that, with that agreement, we can move forward and have this bill move to the next stage.

I agree with the member from Timmins–James Bay when he says that moving forward, after this debate is concluded or after my two minutes have concluded, we're in a position to then not put up any further speakers on behalf of the NDP. We won't put up any more speakers, and if no one else puts up any speakers, then this bill will naturally move on to the next stage. I ask us all to consider, if we really want to move this bill forward, let's take that initiative and let's do that. That would be a step in the right direction.

Going back to my initial point, there's a lot of things that go on in this House that outside of this House no one really gets and no one really appreciates. Some of those things we all understand are part, I guess, of the way things work here. But with certain areas and certain bills, we can put our partisanship aside and we can say, "Listen, for the good of the province and the good of the community, we can actually move things forward without worrying about what the political landscape says."

In this case, there is no political landscape. This is something that will improve the Law Society Act. It's an amendment that moves forward some strong initiatives, and we need to support it. So I ask once again for us all in this House to support this bill and assist in it moving forward as speedily as possible. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Pembroke–Nipissing—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but in any order I still know how to make it home. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Bill 111: I'm just going to explain a little bit of the machinations that the House leader for the third party made of it that people don't understand. I accept that version of it.

I want to make it very clear: Our House leader, Jim Wilson, approached the other parties last week, gave them a notice, gave them an hour on a non-contentious bill, as the House leader says, that we had all talked about in House leaders on more than one occasion. We wanted to find a way to get this through the House because it was necessary. Otherwise, these elections wouldn't take place and it would be another four years before they could put more paralegals on the board. So we gave a notice to the other House leaders. The NDP decided to vote against that or not give unanimous consent.

We were given no notice this morning that this was coming. Our House leader, in fact, is in a press confer-

ence. But I wanted to make it very clear that we support this legislation and we want it to move forward.

The motion that we tabled last week, if this—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If you'd hold your horses for a second there maybe, eh?

If this is the motion, and I'd like to hear it again, we're prepared to end the debate on this, and during motions this afternoon, when it's the appropriate time, have the government House leader come forward with a motion for unanimous consent. We will support it, move this bill through, along with the declaration of Sikh Heritage Month—I believe it's April—and Frank Klees's first responders bill. We're prepared to do that.

We expect the respect of receiving notice when this is going to be done in the House. We gave notice to the other House leaders. We will do this, if that is what comes through motions this afternoon. As far as we're concerned, Madam Speaker, we're prepared to end this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's good to hear that we could potentially address Bill 111 today. I do want to touch on the bill a little bit. I know that the previous speaker was more concerned with the machinations of this place, and sometimes they dominate, but I do think it's important to touch on the fact that there are some important pieces contained within this legislation which will improve access to justice. Whenever we are talking about justice in this place, it should deserve our full attention.

We actually just yesterday received a formal apology for the people from Huronia, whose rights as citizens contained within this province were abused for years. Justice is a slow machine and there are too many people in this province who, quite honestly, are denied justice on a daily basis. I think the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton made this point very clear, that poverty is an enabler of abuses of justice. Mental health—certainly in our jails and our prisons today, as high as 40%. There was an indication of prisoners suffering in many ways from mental illness and certainly, our racialized communities and our marginalized communities are over-represented in the prison system. I hope that we can all agree that you do not build a strong province or a strong country by building more jails.

So the paralegals, 5,600 now in the province of Ontario, should improve access to other justice avenues versus ending up in prisons. Certainly, today, if we can get this done—for the life of me, I can't understand why it takes so long to get things done like this. But if we can accomplish something today, then we certainly should, not just for our own reputations, but for the people of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 111, and it's very encouraging to hear that it seems like we're going to get this done this afternoon. It is kind

of amazing how long it takes us to get things done that we all agree on.

I would like to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his remarks. It's obvious he has a passion for fairness and justice. I would like to touch on one thing he mentioned, which is local access to justice. In my community of Ottawa South, we have the south-east Ottawa community legal clinic, which has been serving people for probably about 20 years now. I visited it about eight weeks ago and met with the executive director, Gary Stein. The work that they do there is incredibly important work. It provides to those people who are of low income, new Canadians, access to justice in front of tribunals, at refugee hearing boards.

Sad news in Ottawa is that the hearing panel has now moved from Ottawa to Montreal. If you can imagine being a new Canadian or new to Canada, being a refugee, and having to travel two hours to get to a hearing, with your legal clinic adviser with you, your family—it's incredible that it has happened. It is really an impediment to what is fairness and justice.

Again, I'd like to say I support this bill. I'm glad we're going to get it done.

I'd like to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Very briefly, Speaker—thank you—I think this is probably an example of some very excellent lobbying, explanation, convincing on all three sides from the law society.

I'll do a shout-out to our friend Sheena Weir, because I think she has done an excellent job explaining the value and importance of this piece of legislation.

Ultimately, it's our job to get it done, so we will try to facilitate that today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think we've heard it all. We're all ready to move on this, but let's do it in a way that respects the role that we all play here in the Legislature.

During motions today, let's hope that the government House leader has a motion prepared to move on what we asked for last week and what has been repeated by the member from Brampton today. Let's get Bill 111 proclaimed, as well as the two private members' bills that we all agree are non-contentious, and we can all have a merry Christmas.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being nearly 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to introduce the family of page Zachary Piette. The family is with us to-

day in the east gallery. We're joined by Zachary's father, Richard Piette, from Guelph, and Zachary's grandparents Allan and Edna Piette, from Oak Ridges–Markham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome Harold Wilson, who is the PC candidate for the riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, down to Queen's Park today. I hope he has a good day at Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to introduce Richard Piette, the father of page Zachary Piette, who is from riding of London West, also here with grandparents Edna and Allan Piette.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR THORNHILL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have received a letter from Mr. Peter Shurman, which communicates his resignation as a member for the electoral district of Thornhill effective December 31, 2013.

Accordingly, on that date, I will issue a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, we had some devastating news this morning in London, Ontario, where Kellogg's is now closing down a plant that has been there for generations. These are 500 well-paying jobs in our province. Sadly, this is the latest of a hemorrhaging of middle-class, good manufacturing jobs in our province.

Premier, I've asked you every day in the Legislature when you're going to bring forward a jobs plan to reverse the decline and to bring good jobs back to the province of Ontario. My simple question is, with three days left in the session, are we going to see a jobs plan from your government? Are you out of ideas? Are we going to see more jobs leave the province of Ontario, like Kellogg's? Can you bring forward a jobs plan and bring jobs back to our province? You've got three days left in the session; will you do so?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I certainly agree with the premise of the first part of the opposition leader's question, and that is that this is very bad news for the families and for the workers at Kellogg's. My first concern is for the affected workers and the impact that this will have on their families and on the broader community.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is closely monitoring the situation, and they will respond quickly to the announced layoffs. As I understand it, they have not been contacted at this point, but they will respond immediately, and they will work with the other levels of government to ensure coordinated services for all of those affected.

We'll continue to support growth and expansion of Ontario's agri-food business. In the supplementaries, I will talk about some of the investments that have been made and the businesses that are coming to the province. But my first concern is for those affected workers at Kellogg's.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you're the Minister of Agriculture. You keep seeing food processing jobs disappear. We can still buy these products; we can still buy Kellogg's Special K and Raisin Bran. But it's no longer going to be made in Ontario; it's going to be made in the state of Michigan. We saw that Heinz ketchup now will be coming out of Ohio instead of the province of Ontario. Our greatest export seems to be manufacturing jobs. I want to turn that around.

I don't doubt that you're going to reach out and you're going to try to help these families. You're going to try with retraining, and good for you; that's your job as Premier. But a bigger goal is to actually bring good jobs back to our province of Ontario, to stop the hemorrhaging, to make Ontario open for investment and to give some hope, not for an unemployment cheque or a new course but hope for a good, steady, middle-class job so you can provide for your family. That's what we're fighting for.

So let me ask you this. There are three days left in the session. You have no jobs plan. Will you agree to a PC call to extend the sitting of the Legislature, to give you time to bring a jobs plan to turn this province around?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health will come to order. The Minister of the Environment will come to order. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak about some of the specific support that we've given to Kellogg's over the last few years.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will come to order. The member from Leeds-Grenville will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And I'm happy to talk about the 474,700 net new jobs that have been created in this province since June 2009, and since February, 59,200 net new jobs in Ontario. So I'm happy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Dufferin-Caledon, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and I will come back to the Conference Board of Canada's projections, which are very good. But I want to talk specifically about Kellogg's.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In 2007, Kellogg's built a 205,000 square-foot—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leeds-Grenville, come to order—second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —manufacturing facility in Belleville. That was an investment of \$120 million initially. The Ontario government provided financial support for that initial investment, over \$9 million alone, under the Advanced Manufacturing Investment Strategy.

So when the Leader of the Opposition talks about a jobs plan, we've been implementing a jobs plan. Jobs are coming to Ontario. It is very unfortunate that this particular plant is shutting down, but there—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, if this is your jobs plan, it has got to be time for you to pack it up and go, because we're losing jobs every single week.

When I hear that your plans are to double down on Dalton McGuinty's failed energy policies—you're going to drive hydro rates further through the roof. You measure your success based on how many bills you get through with more and more red tape.

How do we measure our success? How you grow the economy; how many jobs you create to make Ontario number one in Canada.

Five hundred good, well-paying jobs—500 private sector union jobs—are joining the ranks of the 100,000 that we've lost already. The only jobs you're creating seem to be government jobs or minimum-wage jobs in the private sector.

I believe we can do a lot better than this. I believe we can give hope to those who have lost hope and restore faith in this great province of Ontario.

Will you extend the sitting? Bring forward a jobs plan. That will give you at least eight days to give hope to those who are losing hope in our province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment will come to order—second time.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that we offered the opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Dufferin—Caledon: second time, and last.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —the opportunity to support night sitting so we could get more legislation through. They voted against night sittings, so that offer of a longer time—I want to draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to the Conference Board of Canada report that came out. What it says—it was a very positive report yesterday, Mr. Speaker—is “Ontario will see its economic growth rate jump from a projected 1.2%” in 2013 “to 2.2% in 2014 and 2.6% in 2015.... The province's economy will add more than 300,000 jobs from 2013 to 2015” and “Ontario's exports will also benefit from a lower Canadian dollar relative to the US” dollar.

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The work we are doing on this side of the House and the investments we are making are working. The fact is it is unfortunate that there is a readjustment that Kellogg's has made, a corporate decision. That will affect the plant in London, and that is very unfortunate—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, last time.

Finish, please. Wrap up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do not diminish the pain at all that those people who are at the Kellogg's plant in London will feel, but it is our responsibility to look at the broader picture and make sure we give those people support. We will do that, Mr. Speaker.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I don't doubt that the Premier feels for these people; we all do here in the assembly. They just want a leader with a plan who's going to give them a job, not a UI cheque. That's all they want in the province of Ontario.

The Premier references a Conference Board of Canada report. What that report actually says is that the Americans are recovering. They're going to demand more products. They're highlighting the American recovery, and no wonder, because Kellogg's is moving from Ontario to the United States. Caterpillar has moved from Ontario to the United States. John Deere has moved from Ontario to the United States. We have Henniges Automotive in Welland, Ontario, that has picked up and moved to the United States. They blame the high cost of electricity. They blame the tax and regulatory environment. They blame bill after bill after bill you bring in that binds their hands and undermines our competitiveness.

Yes, you're damned right the Americans are growing. They're taking all of our jobs. I want to see jobs in the province of Ontario. Why don't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The premise of the Leader of the Opposition's question is just not true. The fact is that there are companies coming to this province. I can go through the list: Natra is setting up a confectionary food processor in London, a manufacturing facility; Ferrero in Brantford; Royal Canin in Puslinch; Puratos in Mississauga; Maidstone Bakeries in Brantford; Dr. Oetker in London; and Bolthouse Farms in Wheatley. There are food processing plants—and we're talking just about that sector—that are opening and expanding in this province.

The fact is that there's a very difficult situation that's taking place right now at Kellogg's. I do not diminish that in any way, I understand that is a concern. But the fact also is that Kellogg's has located in Belleville. We have made investments in that plant in Belleville, Mr. Speaker. Kellogg's has invested several million dollars in packaging technology in Belleville—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, they're not relocating from London to Belleville; they're closing down.

Some 550 people are out of work, and you try this Bobby McFerrin spin, Don't Worry, Be Happy. But all of us should worry, and those who have lost their jobs are far from happy. They want to see a leader with a plan to actually get people into good jobs again, to put entrepreneurs back in business, to balance the books. I've laid out that plan; my team and I have laid out that plan.

Nova Chemicals, another project at risk in Sarnia, Ontario, could bring a couple of hundred jobs—a polyethylene plant: They're looking between the States and the province of Ontario. They're seeing energy rates go through the roof.

I want those jobs here. I want to give hope. I don't want to see any more Kelloggs, any more Cats; I don't want to see any more John Deeres, CCLs or Faurecia in Bradford; I want to see jobs staying here.

We'll give you an extra week. Will you please come up with a plan and stop the bleeding of manufacturing jobs in our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that Ontario is up 179% in job creation since the recession and the US is up 85%, so the premise of the Leader of the Opposition's question is completely flawed.

We are recovering more quickly than US jurisdictions. The fact is that we are making investments in advanced manufacturing.

Let's just be clear: The plan that the Leader of the Opposition is putting forward is one that would provoke a race to the bottom. When he talks about right-to-work, what he's talking about is undermining the organized labour in this province—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, come on. These people should have right-to-work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order. The member from Leeds—Grenville is warned. The Minister of Rural Affairs is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thunder Bay—Atikokan, come to order.

Complete, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The underpinning of what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about is undermining the gains in job protection that have been made over decades by organized labour. We're not going there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The problem is, Premier, your plan is for people to work for zero. The folks at Kellogg's who had this disastrous news today are going to make zero. Those at Heinz are making zero. Those at Henniges in Welland are making zero. Those who worked at Xstrata in Timmins—now in Quebec—are making zero in the province of Ontario. I could go on for all question period.

Premier, my point is, we need to stop the bleeding. We need to restore hope to this province. We need to say to that young university graduate who's got—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —that she has a future here in the province of Ontario.

We need to say to that young tradesman getting into being an electrician that they can find hope here in Ontario, not Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Michigan or Indiana. They are eating our lunch. It's time for a new plan. It's time to turn things around.

I cleared the deck so you could bring forward a plan, and you failed to do so. Will you bring forward a plan before Christmas? If not, steal our plan. We've got one; we can turn this around and get Ontario back on top again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is going to keep banging this drum, but the reality is that we are up 474,700 net new jobs since June 2009. That is just the reality. Since February, we're up 59,200 net new jobs, and 179—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, come on.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton: last time. The member from Northumberland, you're warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and 179% recovery since the recession. These are not numbers that we're making up; these are objective numbers. The fact is, there is a recovery.

I am very, very disappointed that the people at Kellogg's in London are going through what they're going through. But the fact is, we have to look at the whole picture. We are recovering jobs, and we're going to continue to do that.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for Premier. After years of delay and discussion, the government has once again promised to take steps to rein in public sector CEO compensation. Can the Premier tell us what her CEO pay cap will be and when it may be in place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said in the House before, we are acting on our commitment to review and to put in place ranges, which would mean caps on executive compensation.

The fact is that the proposal that the leader of the third party put forward did not take benefits into account, did not take into account the full benefit package, the full compensation package. We believe we need to do that. That was a blunt instrument that they brought forward. We need a much more sophisticated and strategic approach, and that's what we're going to put in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People have heard promises from this government for years, but the same old policies and tired ideas stay in place.

In fact, as the gas plant scandal was heating up last September, the Liberals tried to change the channel and promised to implement a salary cap at twice the pay of the Premier. Instead of making it happen, they actually shut down the Legislature.

Last year, the CEO of Hydro One got a raise of \$70,000. That pay hike alone is more than most families make in an entire year. Can the Premier tell us how many five- and six-figure pay hikes we'll see next year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we have said is that we will act on our commitment, which is to introduce legislation to directly control the compensation of senior executives across the broader public service, including hard caps.

But in doing that, we need to establish some frameworks, and we need to do the research that would allow us to bring in a piece of legislation that would actually deal with the issue and would not be a blunt instrument that would not take into account full compensation packages.

That is the work that we are going to do. We will introduce the legislation in early 2014. That was our commitment, and we will follow through on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In 2010 and again, less than a month ago, Liberal MPPs voted against capping CEO salaries, but now they claim they're ready to move forward. The record speaks for itself. In 2010, the Liberals voted against capping CEO salaries. In 2012, they prom-

ised to cap CEO salaries. In 2013, they voted against capping CEO salaries.

Now, with the Auditor General scheduled to release her annual report this afternoon, the Liberals are making another desperate ploy to try and change the channel once again.

Why should people believe the Liberals this time, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, we said we were going to do this, and we are following through on that.

I believe that, last week, when the leader of the third party was talking about her plan, it was very difficult for her to explain what exemptions she would have in place, Mr. Speaker.

To my point about having to have legislation that's strategic and understands the sophistication of the issue and understands that we have to look at whole compensation packages and we have to look at a range of technical expertise that's needed in various sectors—that's why we need legislation that encompasses all of that and is not a blunt instrument. So it's true that members of our government have voted against a blunt-instrument legislation that would not do that, would not accomplish what the leader of the third party is saying it would.

We are going to act to make sure that the legislation we introduce deals with the complexity and the concerns around those executive compensation packages—the whole packages. That's the work that we're going to do, Mr. Speaker.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. This Premier just doesn't seem to get it. People can't make ends meet, and at the same time, they're watching high hydro rates drive jobs out of the province. We saw it in the Ring of Fire, the Heinz factory closing in Leamington or today's jarring news out of London about the loss of more than 500 jobs at the Kellogg's plant. People expect their government to take every step possible to curb high hydro bills. Instead, people are watching as CEOs and executives at their power companies get pay hikes that are higher than their annual paycheques.

Is the Premier ready to cap public sector CEO salaries and pass the savings on to the people who are paying the bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've already said that we're going to introduce legislation to directly control the compensation of senior executives across the broader public sector, including hard caps, so the answer is yes. We've made a commitment to do that, and we have said we are going to introduce that legislation to do exactly that. But we are going to do it in such a way that is going to guarantee that we look at the whole compensation packages, that we look at the expertise that is needed in various sectors, and that we recognize the complexity of the issue.

To take a blunt instrument, as the leader of the third party has suggested—which she couldn't even explain in terms of what the exemptions would be—does not make sense. That is not good public policy. That is why we did not support it.

We are going to introduce legislation that is actually going to put in effect those hard caps in a way that takes into account the full compensation packages.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If people work hard and play by the rules, they should be able to get ahead, but as the bills keep going up, people are working harder and harder just to make ends meet.

Nellie is retired. She wrote to us: "Hydro rate increases ... dramatically affect the lifestyle of seniors who are on fixed pension incomes. We just keep trying to trim back anywhere we can ... I try to have the 'necessities,' not luxury items. Even food is getting difficult with the rising prices.

"Who will be the ... one to put a stop to all these ongoing increases by people making exorbitant salaries that are more than one of us make over a lifetime?"

Does the Premier have an answer for seniors like Nellie?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the leader of the third party knows that we have put in place programs to support and give a break to exactly the kind of person that the leader is talking about, people who are on a low income and who are struggling. We recognize that they need a break on hydro rates and they need support on property taxes and so on, so we've put those programs in place.

In terms of the long-term energy plan, we also have worked to take costs out of the system, so the renegotiation of the Samsung deal, the reductions as a result of not going ahead with new nuclear—we have made those decisions because we recognize the importance of affordability.

The other issue is the focus on conservation and putting supports in place so that people can conserve, because that is the cheapest power, Mr. Speaker: power that is not used.

I would ask the leader of the third party, what is her plan in terms of energy costs going forward? How would she reduce costs?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are finding it tougher to balance the household budget. The government is telling people to tighten their belts, but despite all the promises from this government, salaries for top CEOs keep going up.

We received an email that said, "My hubby's ... salary is identical as in 2008. Meanwhile, the cost of hydro skyrockets. [And the hydro companies] run ads and pay execs huge salaries."

Judy wrote, "I keep reading about enormous profits and equally high management salaries at hydro.... It's no-win for the consumer and win-win for the companies and executives."

Speaker, after 10 years of Liberal government, does this Premier really think that people believe her when she said she needs a little more time to study the problem of million-dollar salaries for public sector CEOs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The tone of the leader of the third party's question notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, we are introducing legislation in early 2014. We made a commitment. I think the leader of the third party knows that we believe that there needs to be very clear action taken with regard to executive compensation. We are going to do that, but we are going to do it in a way that takes into account the whole compensation, not just part of the compensation.

As I said, the leader of the third party's plan did not countenance the whole compensation package. She could not explain, when asked, what the exemptions were and how to deal with technical expertise. Those are the issues that need to be addressed, because we want to put in place good public policy that's going to guarantee that the work that is done is done in the best way possible, but that we have those hard caps in place. That's what our legislation will do.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, we are again joined in the House today by Kimm Fletcher, with whom you are familiar. Ms. Fletcher is accompanied by Mike Box, who has plasmablastic non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and who, like Kimm, could not get OHIP coverage for his prescribed drug Velcade. With them also—Madi is not here, but she was here this morning; she's too tired to come into the House. She has cystic fibrosis, and the drug Kalydeco dramatically increased her lung function. Others have joined them—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Madi is here; she's in the back row.

Minister, Kimm and her colleagues are here because Ontario's health care system doesn't work for them. You have said that health care is about patients first. Will you put these Ontario patients first, Minister? They rely on you to help them. What will you tell them today as their Minister of Health? Will you make it right for them today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the people who we're talking about today and their family members and loved ones here to the House.

I want you to know that we are very, very committed to getting people the drugs they need and the drugs that work for them, Speaker. We have tripled funding for cancer-fighting drugs. We have done that because we want people to have the very best shot.

We do have a process. We have taken the politics out of making decisions around what drugs are funded. We

did that for a very good reason. We think that it is the experts who should give us advice on what drugs are effective, and that is what we do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Minister, on November 8, Roche, the manufacturer of Avastin, sent you and the Committee to Evaluate Drugs new information about a study from McGill University hospital using Avastin to treat brain cancer. The results of the study indicated that Avastin was efficacious in prolonging the lives of patients with glioblastoma multiforme, the cancer affecting Kimm Fletcher.

Roche has suggested that your government look at reimbursement under a conditional funding mechanism like the Evidence Building Program. Roche has also indicated the willingness to share the risk.

Minister, it's now December 10, and you and the committee have had over a month to review this information, yet nothing has been done. I understand the committee has not even met. Time is clearly of the essence here.

Kimm Fletcher deserves an answer. When will she get one?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The work that is done by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs and subcommittees of that committee is founded on the best available evidence. They do review new evidence as it comes forward. In fact, the Ontario steering committee for cancer drug programs is reviewing the new evidence that Roche has put forward.

But I say again, we must rely on evidence to make decisions about what drugs work and for what patients.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Today, more than 500 people in London who work at Kellogg's woke up to find that their workplace is shutting down. Families aren't just going to be worried about getting their kids presents over the holidays; they'll be wondering about how they're going to pay the bills.

The Liberal government insisted that their plan of higher HST, higher hydro rates and no-strings-attached giveaways would create thousands of jobs. Is the Premier ready to admit to the hundreds of families in London that these same old, tired ideas simply aren't working, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the leader of the third party, as I did to the Leader of the Opposition, that in fact we have had a 179% recovery of jobs since the recession. That's 474,700 net new jobs; since February alone, we have 59,200 net new jobs. So in fact, jobs are coming to the province. We are recovering.

I am very, very disappointed, and I am concerned about the people at Kellogg's in London, obviously. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will be working with the community on the ground to make sure that those workers have the supports that they need.

But we have to look at the whole picture. We have to look at what's happening across the province, and the

fact is that we are recovering. There will be changes that will happen in particular parts of the province, but overall, we need to look at the jobs that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the blows to southwestern Ontario keep coming under this Liberal government. If that's the kind of changes the Premier is proud of, I don't think many people agree with her.

Last month, it was hundreds of people losing their jobs at Heinz. Now it's hundreds of people losing their jobs at Kellogg's.

The Liberals have talked about the importance of food processing jobs, but that has been all talk and no action.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will come to order—last time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats have put forward real solutions that will work, like getting hydro rates under control or rewarding companies when they create jobs or rewarding companies when they actually invest in Ontario. Instead, families in southwestern Ontario get more studies, more conversation and more job loss.

Is the Premier going to admit that the Liberal status quo is another body blow to southwestern Ontario that is leaving 500 families in London wondering whether they're going to be able to pay the bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the position of the leader of the third party, but I don't know if she's aware of the companies that are coming to the province. I went through a list of them: Natra in London, Ferrero in Brantford, Royal Canin in Puslinch, Puratos in Mississauga, Dr. Oetker in London. So there are businesses that are expanding and opening.

To the leader of the third party's first point, about electricity prices, I would say to her once again: What is her plan to reduce electricity costs? What is her plan for the diversity of the mix in this province? What is her plan to deal with communities in the north that need to be connected? There is no plan. We have a plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last Friday, I had the opportunity to travel to Timmins, along with Premier Kathleen Wynne and eight of my colleagues, to attend the very first Northern Leaders' Forum. This forum brought together northern, municipal, aboriginal and community leaders, as well as members from our government, to discuss ways in which we can continue to

drive job creation and economic growth in northern Ontario. This truly was a historic forum, and I certainly look forward to travelling back to northern Ontario soon.

I'm wondering if the minister could please inform the House of how our government will continue to build on the positive momentum generated by the Northern Leaders' Forum.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member from Vaughan is absolutely right: This was an historic forum—and I was thrilled that so many members of our government were able to attend, including Premier Wynne.

Our government is absolutely committed to working with all of our partners across northern Ontario to help create a stronger, more diverse and sustainable northern economy. I think it's fair to say that, as leaders in our communities, we all share responsibility for driving job creation and business growth across the north. With the support of Premier Wynne, our government is absolutely committed to growing the economy of northern Ontario. I was very pleased, as minister, to commit to holding quarterly meetings with the aboriginal leadership, NOMA, FONOM and NOLUM.

Moving forward, these meetings will help build on the success of this forum and ensure that northern Ontario remains on the right track towards prosperity and growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for that response. I can tell in particular that the minister's announcement of the quarterly meetings was certainly well received by everyone in attendance at the forum.

At this particular forum, we did discuss a variety of issues. However, one common theme throughout the day was our Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. Our government is committed to working with northern leaders in order to advance this growth plan. In fact, this is yet another part of our government's strategy to invest in people, to invest in modern infrastructure and to support a dynamic and innovative business climate.

Will the minister please provide an update to members of this House regarding how our government is working with northerners to implement the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Since the release of the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, we have seen municipalities, organizations and aboriginal communities achieve some amazing things that reflect the strength and the resilience that all northerners share. We've seen the creation of an independent not-for-profit northern policy institute, the opening of a new school of law at Lakehead University and a new school of architecture at Laurentian University, continued investments in programs like the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. creating jobs all across the north, our northern highways program—over \$500 million to spend this year—the Northern Communities Investment Readiness Program preparing us for the economic opportunities in the north, and the introduction of a new, \$100-million fund to improve infrastructure in small, rural and northern communities.

Speaker, there's no question that northern Ontario has its own set of unique opportunities and challenges, and

our government will continue to invest in people and invest in infrastructure and work to create a dynamic business climate that encourages further growth.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is also to the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Yesterday, I had a meeting with a major southwestern Ontario employer in the agri-food sector. The owner and the investors indicated to me that if they don't get their energy prices under control—as a result of your mismanagement in that sector—they're going to have to leave Ontario. That's 400 jobs.

Let me explain to you, Speaker, what the real issue is here for them. It's not necessarily their outdated labour policies. It's not necessarily some of their regulatory burdens that are excessive in the province. In this case, it is the global adjustment. In January last year, they paid \$60,000 for their global adjustment, and by September, that went up to \$183,000.

Does the Premier think it's fair for a business in Ontario to be paying over \$1 million to the global adjustment while they're struggling to survive in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy will want to comment on the supplementary.

First of all, let me say once again that I am very disappointed at what has happened at Kellogg's. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will be working with the workers on the ground.

In terms of electricity costs, as I have said, our long-term energy plan takes costs out of the system and focuses on conservation. The Leader of the Opposition has acknowledged that he has no idea how he would lower costs. He has no idea what his plan would be to deal with electricity costs, he has no idea how he would get costs out of the system, and he has no idea what supply mix he would support, because the opposition party simply opposes everything that we've done on energy.

The reality is, we came into office in 2003. We've been cleaning up the energy mess that was left by that party since that day, and we will continue to do so.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I just told her an Ontario company with 400 employees, which pays over \$1 million on the global adjustment alone, may leave this province, with more people in this province being out of work because of her destructive policies. The question I put to the Premier was a serious one. What is she going to do in order to alleviate the concerns of this company? What is she going to do in order to make sure that the jobs stay in this province?

Tim Hudak not only has a plan on how to keep jobs in the province, he also has a plan on affordable energy. We're happy to send it over to her so she can adopt it. We've asked for an extra week to sit here in the assembly to adopt those plans.

Will the Premier take these concerns seriously? Will she stand in her place? Will she commit to this party and the rest of the people in the province of Ontario that she will get back to work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Order, please.

Interjection: Double double.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wouldn't double down.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We offered the opposition party the opportunity to have night sittings this week if there was more that they would like to discuss, and they voted that down.

We have had a 179% recovery of jobs since the recession. We have a long-term energy plan that actually takes costs out of the system and puts in place a sustainable, predictable plan that the energy sector needs, and that people in this province need, in order to be able to know how their energy supply is going to work over the next number of years. So, in fact, we have a plan in place.

I am very disappointed at what's happening at Kellogg's. The reality is that we will work with those folks and make sure that they have all the supports they need.

At the same time, there are food processors coming to Ontario, and we are going to work to make sure that that trend continues.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre également. For weeks now, the Minister of Health has made up a number of excuses as to why she did not release the forensic audit of Ornge. Then, yesterday, she said her hands were tied in terms of releasing this information because of an ongoing OPP investigation. But the fact is, the OPP gave approval for the release of this audit back in May 2013, telling the Minister of Health that the audit's release would not have an impact on the ongoing OPP investigation.

Will the Premier tell us which story she believes—the OPP or her Minister of Health?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to discuss this. I was the one in my ministry who called for that forensic audit to happen in the first place.

I did receive an interim report in February. Members of the committee have had that interim report for many, many months, Speaker. Contained in that interim report was information that, for me, indicated that there were serious allegations, and that was referred to the Ontario Provincial Police.

That was exactly what should have happened. That was what happened. The interim report, which the member opposite has and members of the committee have, contained information that led me to directly send that to the OPP. That was the right decision. It remains the right decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: Back to the Premier, please. It is unbelievable that two years after learning of the scandal at Ornge and the minister's lack of oversight, we are still uncovering shameful details. Time and time again, we see a pattern of the Minister of Health failing to do her job of oversight and then refusing to admit that she's made mistakes.

Yesterday, she claimed, and continues to claim, that the OPP's investigation tied her hands in the release of the audit. But the fact was that for the last six months, the OPP has been saying the exact opposite.

My question is simple. To the Premier: Does the Premier think that the Minister of Health's handling of the Ornge file is appropriate, and at what point will the Premier say that enough is enough and demand accountability?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's really important to say again that members of the committee requested two million pages of documents, that they received. Contained in those documents was the forensic audit interim report. They received it not once, not twice, but three times.

It's clear that members of the committee are requesting documents and they are not reading that information. Had they read that information, they would have known exactly why the OPP were called in to address that issue.

PAN AM GAMES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. My colleagues opposite have expressed shock and concern over the fact that the Pan/Parapan American Games' athletes village is a separate investment from the operating budget for the games. As this was publicly announced with the original bid more than four years ago, their shock and concern seems, frankly, out of place. In fact, major newspapers reported this four years ago, and as recent as our 2013 budget states, it is not part of the organizing committee's operating budget.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he explain what the athletes' village will bring as the legacy piece to the West Don Lands?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Scarborough-Guildwood for asking.

The village is part of a broader revitalization of the West Don Lands and the Toronto waterfront. Linking it with the Pan and Parapan American Games accelerates the pace of redevelopment by more than 10 years. It will also open up adjacent provincially owned land in the West Don Lands for future development.

Following the games, the development will become the hub of a new, sustainable, mixed-use pedestrian- and

bicycle-friendly community that includes a new streetcar line, a new 82,000-square-foot YMCA, and market housing, affordable housing and social housing units.

All these wonderful benefits and legacies will become available when the games are over.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I am pleased to hear that our government is focused on building an infrastructure legacy that will serve Ontarians for generations to come.

As I heard at yesterday's committee, this capability to build the athletes' village is potentially exportable for other games, internationally. However, there is concern that despite significant investment in facilities such as the Goldring Centre and the former Ivor Wynne Stadium, we will still need to help Toronto's vulnerable. And through our government's investment of \$600 million in affordable housing since 2003—there are still far too many Torontonians who are unsure of where they will sleep tonight.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he tell this House how our government and these games will ensure that Ontario's most vulnerable have access to affordable housing?

Hon. Michael Chan: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question and her tireless advocacy for our most vulnerable. It gives me an opportunity to talk about the importance of the Pan Am Games and the legacy they'll leave for Toronto.

After the 10,000 athletes and their team officials leave the province, the athletes' village will bring new lives and opportunities to Toronto's most vulnerable. This legacy project will bring forward affordable rental housing to 253 Toronto families. It will go towards making home ownership easier, with 100 new affordable ownership units. This redevelopment will also see the first-ever George Brown College residence being built, which will provide affordable housing for 500 students.

Our investment will create and support 5,200 jobs during construction. It will not only build housing, but it will transform the former west Don Valley industrial lands into a beautiful, sustainable, mixed-use neighbourhood.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. In response to the public accounts committee's request for the forensic audit that the minister said she didn't read, we received the reports yesterday.

Equally as disturbing as the results of the actual forensic report was the deputy minister's covering letter, in which he goes out of his way to whitewash the minister's contradictory statements about what she read and when.

1120

First, the minister claimed she hadn't read the report. Then, when she realized how incompetent that sounded, she told us she read an interim report. Now we find that there was never an interim report. What there was was

this two-page briefing document that even the deputy minister referred to as an interim report.

The interim report has 106 pages; this has two. Why did the minister say she read an interim report when she knows full well—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Call it whatever you want. That was the interim report that I received from the forensic investigation team. The committee has had that for months and months.

What's very important to know is that that forensic investigation interim report, that the member now agrees he has, laid out a very clear case for this whole matter to be referred to the OPP, and that's exactly what happened. That was the right decision then, and if I had to make the decision again, I would make the very same decision. The interim report went to the OPP, as did the final report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, this is beyond bizarre. An interim report: two pages. The minister wants us to believe—that we'll simply accept that this is an interim report—106 pages was the final report. This minister was satisfied to not even look at that and be satisfied with a two-page briefing, for crying out loud.

Premier, are you going to accept this from your Minister of Health as competency and accountability and transparency? Well, we don't. What is even worse is that the deputy minister, as well, is referring to this as an interim report.

Why is it that this Premier accepts this kind of cover-up from her minister and the deputy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

The member will withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: I will withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite and members of the committee and others have that interim report. If he can honestly say, if he had been minister and read that two-page—albeit two-page—interim report and would not have referred it to the OPP—I will completely disagree with him. There is enough in that report to refer to the OPP. I was not going to wait until the final report. I thought the OPP should be notified immediately, and they were.

Mr. Frank Klees: If I was the minister, I would have read the final report as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will be seated. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish to point out to the member from Newmarket–Aurora that that was inappropriate.

New question.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. After weeks of being in a legal strike position and after working without a contract since April, 4,500 Red Cross personal support workers will be on strike as of tomorrow morning.

This is not a decision that these dedicated workers take lightly. Their priority is to deliver the highest quality of care to their patients, and striking is the absolute last resort. But, Speaker, these PSWs have been left with no choice because of the terrible working conditions.

Will the minister finally stop ignoring the pleas of Ontario's PSWs and fix the problems in home care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the Minister of Labour will want to respond in the supplementary.

What I can say, Speaker, is that our PSWs are extraordinary people. They work very, very hard every day, bringing care to the people who need it the most. Our commitment to PSWs is very strong, Speaker. I spent a morning job-shadowing a PSW in Milton not very long ago, where I saw first-hand the extraordinary work and the extraordinary care that they bring with them every single day.

I urge both parties to get back to the table to find a settlement. But I can tell you that my respect and my admiration for PSWs is as strong as it could possibly be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Talk and photo ops come cheap, but high-quality home care needs continuity of care, and that means stepping up to finally end the poverty wages that these PSWs, these women, work under.

In the past two years, PSWs have seen a 7% loss in wages, while the CEO of the Red Cross saw a 9% raise. PSWs simply cannot afford to pay the price of the government's wrong-headed choices. As of tomorrow morning, tens of thousands of seniors will also start to pay the price of those wrong-headed decisions. Enough is enough, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister finally recognize that our home care system cannot function when workers cannot afford to work and do the work they love?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, I want to welcome Shaarlean Stewart, the president of SEIU Local 1, and Emanuel Carvalho, executive vice-president of SEIU Healthcare. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Speaker, we very much are aware of this situation, and I would encourage all parties to make every effort to conclude an agreement. I think we know that the best agreements are reached through collective bargaining around the bargaining table. Our Ministry of Labour mediator has been involved in the negotiation and has actually met with the parties nine different times in order to try to reach a deal, and there was a tentative deal, Speaker, as you may know. Our mediator remains available, able to assist at any time, so, Speaker, through you, I encourage all the parties to resume their conversation and reach an agreement through collective bargaining.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Our government has recently introduced the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. This bill reinforces the importance of our government continuing to put an emphasis on infrastructure investments and build on the success of the last decade.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear about some of the innovative and new aspects this bill will bring to infrastructure planning in Ontario. Of interest to young workers in my riding of Ottawa South is a new provision in the legislation that would require the use of apprentices on publicly funded infrastructure projects.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister please update the House on the rationale of this particular aspect of the bill?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As you know, our annual infrastructure spend in Ontario has grown since 2003—and I want to thank my colleague Minister Chiarelli for his leadership on this—to about \$14 billion when my colleague from Ottawa was the minister.

We are looking at building on that platform to require and develop partnerships with the private sector and labour to have registered apprenticeships attached to each of these projects.

The Premier mentioned that there will be 300,000 new jobs created by 2015, according to the Conference Board of Canada. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters actually went further and said there would be 800,000 skilled jobs available in Ontario by 2016.

We will now use our infrastructure spend to get the skills and education training to ensure the skilled workers are there to deal with this incredibly high rate of job creation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the minister. This bill will surely go a long way in helping young skilled workers receive great work experience. I'm particularly proud that our government has taken such a strong interest in helping more young skilled workers find employment.

Mr. Speaker, encouraging the use of apprentices in public projects will help get more young workers into the skilled trades and address our skills shortage.

1130

However, there is some concern and criticism over the bill. Recently, the Toronto Star had a letter to the editor from the Consulting Engineers of Ontario, who had expressed their displeasure that the paper had an article that characterized their profession as one that lacks design knowledge and has a propensity to construct ugly buildings.

While I know this view is not shared by our government, I was hoping that the minister could address the language in this bill that requires an architect to become involved in the design and construction of infrastructure projects.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Actually, I totally agree with my friend from Ottawa South. You've heard me give the

example of the Prince Edward Viaduct, which we sometimes call the Bloor viaduct. That was a collaboration between, I would argue, one of Ontario's greatest engineers, Thomas Taylor, and Edmund Burke, the Canadian architect, not the philosopher. We recognize that when you bring the best of engineering together with the best of architecture and design, you get the most efficient and high-design projects.

Engineers, who we cherish and value, are written into much of our legislation. We're now going to be treating our design professionals the same to create those kinds of collaborations because we're actually trying to stimulate more professional jobs for engineers and architects as part of our build.

The party opposite was talking about the American system and that we should adapt to their system. They've created a job creation rate 50% of Ontario's—really pathetic. It was President Bush's policies that plunged us into this, Mr. Speaker, so we take no lessons from the opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We're going to continue to build—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

New question?

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. When the Auditor General reported on your reckless green energy policies two years ago, we learned that for every so-called green job that is created, four more jobs are lost elsewhere in the economy. In spite of the facts, you continue to propose reckless new economic policies. Now you're ramming Bill 91 through the Legislature in an attempt to create up to half a billion dollars in new costs for retailers and manufacturers. You're doing this even while major contributors to the province's recycling programs, like Heinz and Kellogg's, are leaving the province.

Premier, a simple question: Based on your analysis, how many jobs will be lost for every so-called green job, under Bill 91?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to convey to the member and his wonderful wife congratulations on the birth their new son, with the excellent choice of name, Lincoln Lloyd Harris. I also want to say that he weighed in at six pounds, five ounces. That's the good news.

The bad news is the constant attack of his father on all good things in the environment, including Bill 91.

I want to say to the member that I want to admit some thievery. I actually stole a lot of the contents of Bill 91 from the paper produced by the member of the opposition. I want him to take credit rather than be critical of a very progressive—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: I know Lincoln is actually watching this morning, and I know he's pretty upset with that answer.

I'll actually go back to the Premier because I'd like her, at the end of the day, to answer this question because she'll be responsible for the negative impacts of Bill 91.

In fact, the letter Heinz sent your government in September should have acted as a wake-up call. They pleaded with you to study the economic consequences of Bill 91, but you failed to answer because you clearly haven't conducted any economic analysis. Now, they're leaving the province.

Premier, it's time for you to be personally responsible for the actions of your government. Your environment minister is losing credibility on this file, not only with the stakeholders but members of your own caucus.

Premier, will you bail out the environment minister, pull Bill 91 off the order paper and conduct a proper economic analysis on Bill 91?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't think there's anyone in this House who actually believes any company out there is going to make that kind of decision when we're at second reading on an enabling piece of legislation in a minority Parliament. You would recognize with any of these companies, whether the product is produced in another country or produced in Ontario, there's still the same requirement that is required in terms of the responsibility for the ultimate recycling in those projects.

I encourage members to have these people come to committee, if we ever get to committee. I've encouraged everyone who has any comment at all on this piece of legislation to come to committee to make their representations, to propose any amendments that they deem appropriate, but I want to say that the heart of the legislation really should be given to my good friend the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. The Liberal government announced the sell-off of the ONTC without any consultation or regard for the north. Some 18 months later, due to northerners' work and pressure, the government was forced to reconsider their plan. But in Timmins this past Friday, the Premier made it clear that the cancellation of the Northlander wasn't an option for reconsideration.

At that same meeting, the Premier was issued a challenge to ride the bus from Cochrane to Toronto and see how hard it is for seniors and those who are seeking medical help to make it to Toronto by bus. I've had people—seniors, who helped build this province—who were forced to move from my riding because they couldn't take the bus to Toronto. Is that the Premier's version of one Ontario?

Will you consider reinstating passenger rail service for the people of northeastern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think the member knows very well how hard we're working to make the right decisions related to the long-term sustainability of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. We've got a ministerial advisory committee in place with people such as FONOM president Alan Spacek and North Bay mayor Al McDonald. We're working really hard at focusing on transforming the ONTC so that, indeed, it will have a long-term sustainable future.

I've got some fine quotes here from the members which reflect the fact we are focusing on transformation as opposed to divestment. We want to make the right decisions, the ones that are in the best interests of northerners. We recognize how important the ONTC is as an economic development tool in northeastern Ontario, and we're going to make the best decisions to make sure that the ONTC has a bright future and one that's based on the right decisions being made, so that we can make sure that the ONTC—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have the great honour and privilege of welcoming to the House—and I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming them—the chair of the paralegal committee, Cathy Corsetti; the CEO of the Law Society of Upper Canada, Rob Lapper; the wonderful public affairs individual from the law society, Sheena Weir; and the chair of the law society tribunal, David Wright. Let's give them all a round of applause.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I have a public school down here from Lindsay, Ontario: St. Dominic elementary school. They're not quite here in the gallery at the moment, but they did come to Queen's Park and we welcomed them earlier.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce friends of mine, Mr. and Mrs. Ross. I just can't think of his first name; I forget. I apologize, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce guests from Thorndale: Bill and Linda Ross, visiting for the day. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEAN TIESSEN

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is with a heavy heart that I rise today to offer my condolences and prayers to the family and friends of Dean Tiessen, a trailblazer for the agricultural and agribusiness sectors.

Dean Tiessen from Leamington was senselessly taken from us on Saturday during a robbery in Brazil. But let us not dwell on how he left us. Instead, we must focus on the legacy he left for his family, our community and our province.

Cheryl Abbate, whose niece is married to Dean, stopped by my Leamington office this morning and offered these words: "A brilliant light has been extinguished. He was a great forward thinker, always looking at bettering things—looking to the future."

He received the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence in 2011, honoured for his innovative use of grass as fuel for his family farm's tomato greenhouses. Through his work as president of New Energy Farms, Dean's hard work and innovation have driven the agricultural sector forward and benefitted our community.

On behalf of the entire Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I offer my thoughts and prayers to his wife, Jennifer, his four children, extended family and friends.

POVERTY

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to support the efforts of members of the Anglican Church across southern Ontario who are meeting with their MPPs as part of a non-partisan campaign to help people hit hard by poverty, hunger and homelessness. With over 400,000 Ontarians turning to food banks each month to ward off hunger, they are calling on MPPs to take bold and urgent action to address poverty in our province.

I recently met with a delegation from St. John's Anglican Church in Winona in my riding to discuss the campaign. Their priest reminded me that in Hamilton alone, the number of children using food banks would fill 370 classrooms.

Five actions are proposed as a pathway to dignity for all Ontarians:

- to immediately increase social assistance rates by \$100 would be the first step;
- invest \$120 million in funding for new affordable housing;
- raise the minimum wage to 10% above the poverty line, with an immediate increase to \$11.50;
- index minimum wage and social assistance rates so that they keep pace with inflation; and
- set targets to reduce poverty for all Ontarians.

In the words of Anglican Bishop Michael Bird, "a socially just society is one in which all citizens have enough to flourish." The Anglican Church is doing its part to help our province move towards this vision, and I ask all MPPs to join me in supporting these non-partisan efforts to assist those living in poverty in our province.

FOREST LABORATORIES CANADA INC.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: On November 22, I was delighted to attend the grand opening of the new Canadian head office of Forest Laboratories in Vaughan.

Forest Laboratories Canada is a prescription pharmaceutical business that takes great pride in delivering innovative health care solutions to patients across Ontario. This business is an innovator in the health care industry, and this opening has resulted in the creation of 26 new jobs, with an additional 100 staff expected to join over the next year.

Attracting businesses like Forest Laboratories is exactly what we need in Ontario. They are a leader in their industry, and they greatly assist in keeping our province's economy growing. Their decision to come to Ontario is also proof positive that our government's plan to invest in our people, to invest in modern infrastructure and to support and create a dynamic and innovative business climate is working.

I am personally very delighted that they chose to open in Vaughan. I want to congratulate general manager Greg Engel and everyone at Forest Laboratories Canada and wish them every success in the future.

BURLINGTON ART CENTRE

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Founded in 1978, the Burlington Art Centre stands on Lakeshore Road in my riding, not far from the shores of Lake Ontario.

The BAC was created through the efforts of several visual arts groups which believed the region's working artists needed a home. Seven such groups now create within the centre. Artists of all levels come to be inspired at the Burlington Art Centre, where talented instructors help nurture students of all ages.

The members of this Legislature can get a sense of the work that the BAC fosters because a number of youth artists from the centre are participating in the Legislative Assembly's youth arts program. This program provides an opportunity for young Ontario artists aged 14 to 18 to share their talents with visitors at Queen's Park.

Works of art from the young talent at the Burlington Art Centre will be on display just outside the media studio on the main floor of the Legislative Building, west wing, from now to March 2014. They join a number of other fine young artists from across this great province, and I would encourage every member to take a moment to enjoy the work on display here.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm rising today to speak about Bill 139. For the past two years, I've been raising this concern, which was one of the major concerns in my riding: the fact that temporary job agencies are exploiting workers. It's a serious concern. It's a serious concern that members of the Liberal government were well aware of for more than two years, and I'm so concerned that it took them two years to even act on it. Now that they have acted, they still haven't gone far enough.

The major issue that people are facing is equal pay for equal work. The fact that a temporary job agency employee is earning sometimes half of what a permanent employee is earning is simply unacceptable. We also

need to make sure that people are transitioned from temporary jobs into permanent jobs.

A society that's based on people working in precarious employment will never flourish. We need to make sure we take some real steps to ensure that people get full-time employment, real employment, and that people receive equal pay for equal work.

I'm very concerned that it has taken so long to act on this. I'm looking forward to debating this legislation. But I will be committed to ensuring that we broaden the support to ensure that people get the protection they need.

Without meaningful enforcement, any of the laws we propose will not have an impact, so we need to also strengthen the enforcement of employment standards, employment protection and employment laws to ensure that people are protected the way they deserve to be and the way they should be.

EDWARD LEVY

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to congratulate an incredible transit advocate, Mr. Edward J. Levy, who was honoured with the president's award of recognition by the Simcoe-Toronto chapter of Lambda Alpha International, the honorary society for the advancement of land economics.

Ed received the award on November 26 for his over 50 years of work experience as a consultant, adviser, advocate, historian and author in the field of transportation planning.

Ed is the former president and chairman of BA consulting group.

Over his 50-year career, Ed directed transportation planning studies for large cities across Canada, the United States, Malaysia, China, Czechoslovakia, India—all over the world. Last year, Ed released a compelling and comprehensive book entitled *A Century of Plans, Progress, Politics and Paralysis*, looking at public transit in Toronto: an excellent book. The Web book is full of historical maps, plans and all kinds of interesting anecdotes.

1510

Mr. Ed Levy is a true transit/transportation guru and he also helped found the railway museum at the John Street Roundhouse. As you know, Mr. Speaker, he's been a long-time advocate of maybe the most significant transportation line that we should be looking at: the downtown relief line. I suggest that the downtown relief line be named after Mr. Levy and called the Levy relief line, joining Scarborough to Toronto—the downtown relief line, the Ed Levy line.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise today in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Last night was yet another night of freezing temperatures in the streets of Kiev. However, protesters stayed in the streets in spite of those temperatures to express their discontent with the

president of Ukraine. In spite of a declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, many Ukrainians have never felt as though they were able to freely and fully control their destiny. It's past time that the future of Ukraine was put in the hands of Ukrainians.

I want to convey our sincere hope for a speedy resolution to the ongoing violence against peaceful protesters in Ukraine. I'm proud that our federal government has condemned the violence in Independence Square and I'm happy to hear that Canada will send election observers to Ukraine next month.

Ukrainian Canadians have made massive contributions to Ontario's communities that date back almost a century, many of whom still have very strong ties to their home country. The Ontario PC caucus stands in solidarity with Ukrainians across this province and around the world as they seek to build a free society based on the same democratic values that we cherish here at home.

SHOP THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Ms. Soo Wong: On November 30, businesses from across the greater Toronto area came together to encourage families to shop locally. This campaign, known as Shop the Neighbourhood, was spearheaded to raise awareness and support for local businesses.

Just like communities from across the province, there are many homegrown small business success stories in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. My community is the home of the world-famous Milk Tea King, who is the owner and operator of Marathon Donuts and Coffee, an excellent local hangout that attracts many patrons of all ages. There's also the Colangelo Brothers Food Market, a family-run business that has been providing Scarborough—Agincourt with fresh, Ontario-grown produce for over 48 years.

There are countless other restaurants, flower shops, clothing stores, novelty gift and international food vendors that are community-oriented and are giving jobs, as well as giving back to our communities. When Ontarians shop locally, they are creating jobs in our neighbourhoods, but also supporting our communities in making sure our dollars are spent locally. It also empowers our neighbourhoods to support each other and local causes.

I'm proud to support the local businesses in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and encourage every Ontarian to shop locally during this holiday season.

JOHN WISE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I stand today to recognize the late honourable John Wise. On November 3 of this year, John was inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame. I was privileged to be at the ceremony, which took place at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto.

Mr. Wise's legacy is one of exemplary public service. A dairy farmer by trade, John ran for and was elected MP for the riding of Elgin in 1972. The people of Elgin county elected him four more times.

During his time as MP, Mr. Wise served as agriculture minister of Canada under both the Clark and Mulroney governments. Using his background as a farmer, Mr. Wise left an indelible mark on Canada. His leadership was instrumental in establishing agricultural research stations and laboratories across Canada, pushing through the debt review act, establishing Canada's long-term dairy policy and supporting the formation of the Soil Conservation Council of Canada.

After leaving public office, Mr. Wise remained a dedicated community advocate and was active in local politics, offering his advice and guidance to many area politicians, including myself.

I want to thank the Elgin county office of the warden and the Elgin County Holstein Association for nominating Mr. Wise for this year's hall of fame inductions. Their efforts ensure that John's large contribution to agriculture at both the local and national levels will be remembered for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Clark is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bill 133.

Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that the order for second reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006, immediately be called and that the question shall be put immediately, without further debate or amendment.

Should Bill 133 receive second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, and the order shall immediately be called and the question put, without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE RELATIVE À LA POLICE PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 4, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE RELATIVE À LA POLICE PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mrs. Meilleur, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the following reports from the Auditor General: 2013 Annual Report, and special report on the divestment of Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 12 o'clock midnight today, Tuesday, December 10, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 12 midnight today, Tuesday, December 10, 2013.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I did hear a no, and this is a motion; it's not unanimous consent.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1520 to 1525.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Holyday, Douglas C.

Horwath, Andrea
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 39; the nays are 51.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Tuesday, December 10, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, December 10, 2013. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1529 to 1530.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Holyday, Douglas C.

Horwath, Andrea
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 39; the nays are 51.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act; Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month; and Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice on Bills 111, 52 and 15.

Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move that the order for second reading of Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act, immediately be called and that the question shall be put immediately without further debate or amendment; and

Should Bill 111 receive second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, and that the order immediately be called and the question put without further debate or amendment; and

That the order of the House dated May 16, 2013, referring Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month, to the Standing Committee on Social Policy be discharged, and that Bill 52 shall be ordered for third reading and that the order shall immediately be called and the question put without further debate or amendment; and

That the order for second reading of Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day, immediately be called, and that the question shall be put immediately without further debate or amendment; and

Should Bill 15 receive second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, and that the order shall immediately be called and the question put without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson moves that the order for second reading of Bill 111, An Act to amend—

Mr. Frank Klees: Dispense.

Hon. John Milloy: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do I hear dispense? Dispensed.

Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

MODERNIZING REGULATION
OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION
DE LA PROFESSION JURIDIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act / Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Barreau et la Loi sur les procureurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

MODERNIZING REGULATION
OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION
DE LA PROFESSION JURIDIQUE

Mr. Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act / Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Barreau et la Loi sur les procureurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General has moved third reading of Bill 111. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill be now passed—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—this is a rather unique opportunity for me here—and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE SIKH

Mr. Singh moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month / Projet de loi 52, Loi proclamant le mois d'avril Mois du patrimoine sikh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Singh has moved third reading of Bill 52. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved the bill be cleared as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR
DES PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

Mr. Klees moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day / Projet de loi 15, Loi proclamant le Jour des premiers intervenants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Klees moves second reading of Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

Second reading agreed to.

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR
DES PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

Mr. Klees moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day / Projet de loi 15, Loi proclamant le Jour des premiers intervenants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Klees moves third reading of Bill 15. Agreed? Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Motions? The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer health tax Act; Bill 58, An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day; and Bill 126, An Act to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act.

1540

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice to Bills 105, 58 and 126.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer health tax Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding Bill 105.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Hon. Michael Coteau: Today is International Human Rights Day. It marks the adoption by the United Nations in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This groundbreaking document set out, for the first time, the fundamental rights and freedoms to which all people in all parts of the world are entitled. It affirms the basic dignity and worth of each person. It enshrines the principles of justice and equality and sets the foundation for democratic societies.

Ontario enacted its first Human Rights Code in 1962, the first province in Canada to do so. For more than 50 years, this code has guided Ontario's development into a civil, fair and inclusive society. It is a document that ensures us the right to live, work, and play with dignity, to contribute to society, to enjoy equal rights and opportunities without discrimination.

This week, the world recalls the struggle against South Africa's system of apartheid, and the leadership of the late Nelson Mandela. Mr. Mandela was jailed for his beliefs, but never gave up hope and never gave in to bitterness. His triumphal election as South Africa's first democratically elected president is a reminder to all of us that freedom is always worth fighting for.

As minister, I meet people every day who have come to Ontario from countries where human rights are not upheld and democracy is merely a dream. They chose Ontario because it is known for its belief in fairness and equality and also our commitment to the rights and freedoms of our citizens.

One of the most significant of these freedoms is our religious freedom: the freedom of faith, the freedom to practise one's beliefs. It also includes the freedom to wear religious symbols and coverings in public places.

As an immigrant myself, Mr. Speaker, I'm highly aware of the link between freedom and opportunity. As with all Ontarians, I cherish both, and I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to reinforcing and expanding human rights. In the past few days, as a member, I have heard from my colleague the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment about how he is committed to a fully accessible Ontario workplace by the year 2025. One in seven Ontarians lives

with a disability. They want to contribute to our society and to be connected to their communities. In addition, late last week, my colleague the Minister of Labour introduced a bill to better protect the rights of migrant and temporary foreign workers here in our province.

These are two examples of how we are protecting and expanding basic human rights in the proud tradition of our province, which we've always been a leader in.

Our government is committed to a province where men and women, children and youth can reach their full potential. Since 2003, we have invested over \$900 million to help newcomers settle and succeed. This has enabled newcomers across this province to build rewarding lives for themselves and their families and to help make Ontario stronger.

Today, on International Human Rights Day, our government reaffirms our commitment to defending and advancing the fundamental freedoms and rights that are the foundation of this uniquely diverse community.

We recognize that while tremendous progress has been made, millions of people around the world remain oppressed. Today, we recommit to the struggle for dignity, freedom and rights for all human beings on this planet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise today to recognize Human Rights Day. Today, we recognize the fact that there are some basic things to which we are entitled. We must believe in freedom of speech everywhere. We must believe that all people have a right to self-determination, that they deserve a voice in their future. We must believe that freedom of religion and the freedom to believe and worship according to one's own faith creates a stronger and more stable world. These rights, and many more, provide the foundation stones for Human Rights Day.

In the 65 years since the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights—drafted by Canadian and fellow New Brunswicker John Peters Humphrey—was ratified, we've seen a revolution in international human rights law around the world.

This week we are, in particular, reminded of the battles that we fought and are still fighting to ensure equal treatment and an equal voice for people around the world.

Last week, we lost Nelson Mandela, someone who had dedicated his life to the equal treatment of South Africans, regardless of their colour, in their own country. Mandela spent 27 years in prison because of his commitment to this belief. Upon his release, his first instinct was to forgive those who had put him there.

Over the last many days, our television sets have been deluged with images of what's going on right now in the freezing cold streets of Kiev in Ukraine. For almost all of the last century—and by most accounts, even longer—Ukrainians have had independence in name only. Whether they were dealing with Nazi invaders, Soviet influence or other external pressures, Ukrainians have spent decades yearning for a Ukrainian future that they determine, a future that article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees them.

Here at home, we struggle with some elements of ensuring equality of opportunity and that the Canadian experience is guaranteed to all. One of the great moments of this Legislature in the past year was when all three parties actually stood up here at Queen's Park and said that no article of religious faith would be treated as less than any other here in Ontario. We would recognize, unlike other provincial Legislatures, that a Sikh Canadian or a Jewish Canadian is entitled to the same religious freedoms as their Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox neighbours.

We cannot pretend that there isn't still work to do, though. A good economy means good jobs that are available for all, because lifting our fellow Canadians out of poverty is a human rights issue as well. The best social program has always been and always will be a good job.

We still have strides to make to ensure a future of opportunity and prosperity for young women both here in Canada and around the world. Study after study has told us that the education of women in countries where it's not currently available will lift millions of women out of poverty.

Fundamentally, what we celebrate on Human Rights Day is a foundation set in our past that allows us to build a better future. We celebrate our greater aspirations, a belief that we can indeed achieve.

And, for a kid from Riverview, New Brunswick, looking back at the work of John Peters Humphrey, we celebrate the fact that when you want something done right, Mr. Speaker, you call someone from New Brunswick.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed an honour to stand here and to talk about the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the foundation in this country and indeed in most of the member countries around the world, all 170 of them, of their own human rights and the way that they see people who live within their borders. It came about as a result, and in the aftermath, of the Second World War, and all of the horrors that came with that: the six million who were murdered, the displaced people, the economies in turmoil.

There are 30 articles, and I took some time this morning to read those 30 articles in anticipation of this speech. The 30 articles are things that I think we as Canadians hold very dear to our hearts, that human rights are protected by rule of law so that people are not compelled to rebellion. They talk about equality and freedom and security. It speaks against slavery. It speaks against torture and cruelty of punishment. It speaks of the right of a fair trial of individuals who are arrested. It talks about the equality of the sexes in marriage. It talks about the right of religion and of peaceful assembly. I am proud in this country and proud in this province that the principles have been incorporated into our laws.

1550

Sometimes, though, I must lament the tortuous pace at which those laws are actually seen or take place in the province of Ontario and how long it takes to put those principles that we laud and admire into practice.

My friend the minister has spoken about some of the accomplishments of the government, but I have to speak, too, about the tortuous pace.

One of them is people with disabilities. We know that the act was proclaimed a couple of years ago, but it has a 25-year time frame and a 25-year phase-in until people with disabilities have true equality in this province. Between the time it was passed and today, a great deal of time has gone by, and yet in that same time frame there have been no charges laid against people who are contravening the act; there have been no convictions registered against people who are contravening the act. There has been literally no enforcement, other than the sending out of some letters.

My friend talked in his speech about migrant and temporary foreign workers. Again, it is all very laudatory that we recognize the dilemma they have, but those same workers, by acts in this very Legislature, have been forbidden to form a union. They had to go back to court to fight for that right again, and it was forbidden again. That is not a way that people can get human rights. The Human Rights Code says that all people have the right to form a union, and yet migrant and temporary foreign workers in this country—in this province—do not.

He talked about migrant and foreign workers. They work in appalling conditions, and they are not protected by all the laws of the province of Ontario, nor are they entitled to all the rights and privileges that workers in other industries have. This past week alone brought that right home, when we heard and read about migrant workers killed on farms in Ontario. They're killed because they work in very dangerous conditions that many Ontarians would not want to work in.

He talked about settlement. In this province we spend only a fraction per capita that other provinces spend on the settlement of their new immigrants and refugees who arrive here.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We need more federal money.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend across yells, "We need more federal money." That's true, but this province has been quite the laggard when it comes to all those years when other provinces were getting that federal money and we did not get it, even though the bulk of immigrants in those days came to this province. And other provinces, like the province of Quebec, have actually spent their own money in order to have better settlement services. Would that we had a program that was half as good as those.

We have also lagged behind when it comes time to look at credentials of foreign-born professionals. Although that situation is getting better, there are still far too many people in this province who are driving cabs and delivering pizzas, with PhDs and foreign credentials that are not looked at nearly strongly enough.

We have the rights on paper. We have those rights and it is the foundation of all of our laws, and we need to be proud of that. We just need, as a province, to have those rights upheld with resources. When that is done, it will be proof of our commitment to human rights.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

PETITIONS

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Steve Clark: First of all, I want to thank Caroline Rigitto from my riding for spurring me on with this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

"Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

"Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis;

"Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels. For a CF patient with the specific G551D mutation, access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life; and

"Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province's drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families as it is to those in several countries including the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of the petition and send it to the table with page Arvind.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: A petition from across Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree and give it to page Julia to take down to the table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: This is from the residents of Ajax-Pickering:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA"—environmental assessment—"for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus ... being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I attach my name to this and I will pass it to Ana.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington, the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation has already spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new Darlington reactors;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington" site.

I'm pleased to present this petition to page Amy and sign it in support.

FIREFIGHTERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm presenting this petition for the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association, which is presently honouring platoon chief Dennis Pietrobon, who is resting at Jackson and Barnard Funeral Home.

"Whereas firefighters are routinely exposed to burning chemicals and other toxins in the course of protecting the lives and property of fellow citizens;

"Whereas even with the best respiratory practices and protective equipment, exposures will continue to occur due to absorption through the skin once a firefighter has become soaked during fire suppression activities;

"Whereas epidemiological, medical and scientific studies conclusively demonstrate an increased rate of diseases such as cancer in firefighters versus the general population ..."

They petition "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: 'Amend the regulations of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA), 1997 to include cancer of the lungs, breasts, testicles, prostate, skin and multiple myeloma in presumptive legislation for occupational diseases related to firefighting.'

Rest in peace.

1600

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I agree with this petition, I'm signing it and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition, affix my name to it, and give it to page Cynthia to take to the table.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Todd Smith: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Jeffrey.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from Brantford.

"Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health;

"Whereas breastfeeding is normal and natural but like childbirth it can be complicated requiring specialized support for a family's success;

"Whereas lactation consultants are trained, internationally certified breastfeeding specialists who can assist women having breastfeeding problems, and be resources of breastfeeding expertise in the community;

"Whereas Brantford, until 2005 when the service was cut, had a breastfeeding clinic run by lactation consultants at Brantford General Hospital which was highly utilized...."

They petition "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: facilitate the reinstatement of a lactation consultant led breastfeeding clinic in Brantford General Hospital."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Morgan to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

I agree with this petition, I'm affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Sarah.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has eliminated non-hospital physiotherapy service from the Health Insurance Act; and

"Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

"Whereas under the changes, the cost of visits under the CCAC (community care access centre) model will rise to \$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 per visit through OHIP physiotherapy providers; and

"Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes would be cut by almost 50%, from an estimated \$110 million per year to \$58.5 million per year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of Health as follows:

"That the province guarantee there will be no reduction in services currently available for those who are eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Payton to take to the table.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm presenting a petition from my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many Ontarians employed through temporary employment (help) agencies tend to face unlawful wage deductions, unsafe workplace conditions, with no benefits or severance;

"Whereas a 2012 study conducted by the United Way and McMaster University, entitled It's More Than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being, found that 40% of workers in Ontario are in employment relationships that share characteristics of precarious or non-permanent employment;

"Whereas the same 2012 study suggests that as precarious employment increases, Ontario's workers face increased stress on households, limits on community participation, and increased instances of poverty;

"Whereas the instances of employment standards violations continues to disproportionately impact employees of temporary help agencies, perpetuating issues of precarious employment and poverty for those employed through these agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly undertake legislative reforms to address the inequities created for employees as a consequence of precarious employment through tem-

porary job agencies and safeguard the rights of vulnerable workers, guarantee employee safety, and ensure that all workers in Ontario can" enjoy the benefits they deserve.

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and hand it to page Jeffrey.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli have publicly stated that there will be no time extensions for large-scale FIT contracts in Ontario, and the Ontario Power Authority CEO, Colin Andersen, has stated the authority is expecting developers to meet contract commitments; and

"Whereas the Premier, minister and the power authority must recognize that damage to our rural area from being under continuing threat by industrial wind turbine developers for three years is serious and unacceptable; and

"Whereas the FIT contracts for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—all on or near the Oak Ridges Moraine and in the former Manvers township in the city of Kawartha Lakes—have already been extended for one year or longer;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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"That the government of Ontario, the Minister of Energy the Honourable Bob Chiarelli, and the Ontario Power Authority not issue any further time extensions for FIT contracts and, in particular, for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—before or after expiry of such contracts. We are advised, and we believe, that the 'force majeure' clause in the FIT contracts is completely inapplicable to these projects; accordingly, we respectfully further request the Legislature to instruct the Minister of Energy to adhere to his assurance that extensions will no longer be granted to wind project proponents who have no contractual right to such an extension and who fail to meet their contractual commitments."

This was brought to me from Alison Denure, signed by hundreds and hundreds of people from my riding, and I'll hand it to page Morgan.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 9, 2013, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer health tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm not seeing Mr. Barrett; it ended up with questions for him. Not seeing him, we'll move on to the third party for further debate.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am pleased to be able to rise today to discuss government Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. I had the opportunity to speak on this bill in questions and comments yesterday, and I want to build on some of the points that I raised.

First and foremost I think that, in terms of an exemption for the Employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of companies whose payroll is \$5 million or less, it is an important thing to do. Increasing that \$400,000 exemption to \$450,000 certainly will assist small businesses.

So at the outset I can say that I agree with the principle of supporting small businesses by continuing the exemption for those small businesses, and that this bill does recognize that smaller businesses—those with payrolls of \$5 million or less—are in a significantly different position than those companies that have a payroll of \$5 million or larger.

But my concern with this bill is that it's entitled Supporting Small Businesses Act. I know that many of us have experience with small businesses, either personally or we know constituents, friends or family members who own small businesses. If we were to go to those friends, family or colleagues who run small businesses and say to them, "There is a bill here, and it essentially will continue an exemption that you already had and will increase it by \$50,000. Do you think that this bill supports your small business?", they'd say, "Sure, it gives me a bit of a break, but no, it's not really supporting my small business. It's just providing for a particular exemption and now increasing that exemption. It saves me some of my resources, but really, beyond that, how is that supporting a small business?"

That's exactly what I'm saying today: that this bill provides a small benefit. No one can deny that it does provide a benefit. The problem with this bill is that that's all it does. It provides a very singular and narrow benefit to a small business, when it's entitled Supporting Small Businesses Act. It should have been entitled An Exemption for the Employer health tax Act. That's all it's doing, and to say that it's doing much more than that is certainly not providing clarity on what this bill actually does.

I would love to see a bill being tabled in this House—I would love to be able to debate on a bill that actually was supporting small businesses in a meaningful way. Some of the things we could do are, we could look at how we can encourage entrepreneurs and what we can do to assist people who want to start up a new business. An act that actually provided for some funding or some start-up capital, or that provided for a space to allow a start-up company to begin its work, laws or an act which encouraged collaboration with other small business owners, a bill that provided for or created a climate which would

encourage the growth of small businesses—that could be a bill entitled the Supporting Small Businesses Act. But this bill is just an employer health tax exemption act, and that's my problem with this bill. You can't name a bill something so lofty and deliver so little. It doesn't do justice to the title of the bill, and it doesn't really assist the small businesses who definitely need support.

I want to make one point very clear. In our society, one of the realities is that we have a wide range of businesses. We have smaller businesses, and we have much larger businesses, and all of them contribute to our society in some way. They provide jobs; they provide opportunities; they provide us with essential services; they provide us with goods that people want to consume and partake in. We need, obviously, business in our society, and that's something that no one is questioning at this point. But we also need to acknowledge that, as your resources increase, as your capacity increases, your responsibilities and your obligations should increase proportionately. What I mean by that is, if you're a multi-national, multi-billion dollar corporation, your civic responsibility should be proportionately higher than a much smaller operation that's providing a smaller scale of service. It just seems inherent that there should be some differences. If there is a difference in terms of the scale of operation, there should be a difference in terms of their responsibility and what they provide back to the community. So the civic or corporate—

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum at this point.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Yes, we have a quorum.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: That was a good point of order to yourself.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you so much. We've got to keep things interesting; right? We only have a couple of days left. Why not mix it up a bit? It got your attention, so I appreciate that. I think that's—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Let's not speak across to each other. Come on.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, through you to my colleagues: We need a little element of a jovial touch—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Levity.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh:—levity, if you will, given that we're nearing the end of the session, and I think it's important to keep our spirits high.

Mr. John Vanthof: 'Tis the season to be jolly.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It is the season to be jolly, as my colleague from Timiskaming—Cochrane mentions.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I wish that the Minister of the Environment could repeat his jest, and I would be able to

respond to it, and I would hope to be able to satisfy his query, whatever it was.

The bill acknowledges that there's a difference, but it doesn't do anything beyond that. When we look at these two entities, a small business and a larger corporation, we need to do much more to acknowledge that if you're larger and you have more resources and deeper pockets, then your responsibility to contribute to society is that much more. You probably consume more of the infrastructure, so you have an increased responsibility to give back. That's something we need to look at. At the same time, we also have to acknowledge that smaller businesses need more assistance, require more support in order to encourage their growth.

Some of the suggestions that I proposed were looking at what we can do to create a climate that supports small businesses. Many small businesses are looking to expand, and there should be incentives for their expansion. If they expand their smaller business, what can we do to make it easier for them to expand? What type of incentives can we provide to them in terms of tax relief, but also in terms of access to funds, in terms of accessing resources so they can grow their business? That would be truly supporting small businesses.

I know a number of talented individuals who are starting up businesses in graphic design, who are starting up businesses in strategic branding, and they would love to have some assistance and support. What can we do for them? That's something we need to look at.

What can we do to make use of our talented pool of highly educated students who are coming out of university, who are coming out of professional courses without any real job prospects? It's a severe problem when we have some of the highest rates of youth unemployment.

The NDP proposal to create an incentive for employers to hire youth who are 25 and under was a great step forward, but we need to do more than that. What can we do to encourage young people coming out of university to create their own businesses, create their own enterprises? What can we do to make it easier to do that? How can we provide training, opportunities and mentorship? How can we provide the tools that they can use, then, to create more business and new businesses for themselves, particularly when there is a severe lack, or a shortage, of employment opportunities for youth? These would be some ideas that would actually truly support small businesses.

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There was a group of talented young individuals that came to me that were recently graduated from university and wanted to set up a hub in Brampton. Their goal was to basically create a place where they could come together and share the costs—costs like printing and Internet and meeting rooms. Then, what they would benefit from it, what they would gain from it, is a place where they could work together, and different entrepreneurial ideas, different enterprises, could then interplay, could build synergies, could work together to create a strong business for themselves.

It's an idea that has actually worked and that's been implemented in downtown Toronto. There are a number of hubs like that where they have encouraged start-up companies to set up shop. They've allowed them to work together to share some of the costs, and they are able to burgeon into much larger and more successful businesses.

That type of idea, that type of model, could be something that we could encourage. If there was an act, a truly Supporting Small Businesses Act, that allowed for a forum or a mechanism or a way for those people, those young, passionate, enterprising recent graduates who wanted to create that type of hub in Brampton, but they didn't have any avenues—there were no tools that were provided from the government to support them. That's an idea that we should support. That's something we could get on board with. That would be, again, really supporting small businesses.

An NDP idea that was proposed and has been enacted now in Manitoba is to acknowledge the fact that small businesses and larger corporations are significantly different, and so their contributions to the tax revenue should be different as well. In Manitoba, Madam Speaker, what they have is a 0% corporate tax rate provincially on small businesses—a 0% tax rate—acknowledging the fact that small businesses are one of the major drivers of employment, they are one of the major drivers of creating new jobs, and they are significant contributors to the economy.

What Manitoba has done, under an NDP government—they proposed, “Let’s treat them differently. Let’s have a progressive tax system that deals with small businesses differently,” because the circumstances and resources and the abilities of smaller businesses and large corporations are very apparent. There are significant differences. If we accept that they’re different, then we should treat them differently.

So a progressive tax system is a proposal that the Manitoba government put forward. It was successful. They have enacted that. It’s no surprise that they have a strong foundation for small businesses now, and they are flourishing with respect to that.

We need to do something more significant, we need to do something more meaningful, than just an exemption on an employer health tax. Again, I ask this government to look at what we can do beyond an exemption and look at more broader-reaching and stronger policies that would actually create a climate that encourages small business, that would actually meaningfully support small businesses beyond this small and narrow step.

When we are looking, again, at small businesses and comparing them to larger corporations, acknowledging that all levels of government must support all levels and all sizes of business because we want to encourage a business climate, we also need to look at the fiscal realities in our province. We are in a position where we don't have or we're seeing a lack of revenue. We're seeing, as we're recovering from the recession, that our estimated growth isn't at the level that it was at before.

Our estimated growth predictions aren't going to be able to meet some of the demands that we have in terms of providing for essential services, so we need to look at other revenue streams. Instead of looking only at cutting services, as this government and the Conservatives are considering and proposing, let's look at increasing some of the revenue so that we can cover some of the important services that we have.

We should also look at cost saving, always. That's something we should continually do, acknowledging that sometimes the best solution isn't the most costly solution, that the best type of care or the best type of services don't necessarily have to cost the most. We can also look at greater efficiencies and look at cost reduction mechanisms to still provide the highest quality of care, the highest quality of services, but at the same time, why not look at some of the additional revenue streams that we can explore?

One of the proposals that we've suggested is, in general, the idea of increased corporate tax compliance. We know this is an issue that is a live issue and it's quite real, that corporate tax compliance is costing the treasury a vast sum of money. If we increase that compliance, we could pull in that revenue to our treasury and then use those funds for services that we need.

An issue that the NDP has brought up time and time again is the input tax credits. These input tax credits were initially non-exempt, and now, moving forward, will go online and will create exemptions where large corporations will be able to write off significant entertainment costs. By delaying these HST input tax credits permanently, we could actually maintain the level of revenue, which is something that's quite important. We've talked about that, and we're encouraging the government to look at further compliance as well as looking at that idea.

If we were to look at some of the costs related to corporate tax compliance, we were estimating corporate tax compliance, moving forward from 2013 to 2018-19, and the cost is quite significant. It's quite serious. In 2013-14, the corporate tax compliance, the cost of not addressing that, is in the \$50-million range; in 2014-15, it could be as high as \$75 million; and in 2015-16, \$100 million and on—\$185 million and, finally, to \$200 million in 2018-19. These are areas where we could gain some revenue stream that would assist us in dealing with some of the rising costs related to health care and related to care of our elderly, which is something that we certainly must do.

Again, there isn't much in terms of substance to this bill. While we all, I think, in this House will support the notion of creating this exemption, I think we all can agree that, more importantly, we need to look at other strategies to really work towards supporting our small businesses. I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the struggles that we're facing or we're seeing in Brampton and in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton. There's many entrepreneurs and enterprising individuals who want to set up their businesses, and they find that it's very difficult to do so.

One of the areas where we have a great deal of entrepreneurship is in the transportation industry. A lot of enterprising new Canadians have settled here and have started their own trucking businesses and are sole proprietors or owner-operators, and they have taken on a great deal of risk by investing in their own vehicle. Some of them have purchased more than one vehicle, and they're operating and renting out another truck and they're doing a great job. But the problem is that if we don't support these individuals, if we don't create a climate that encourages their growth, that supports their initiatives, that allows them to access more funds, that allows them to expand their businesses, then we're not really doing our level best to support small businesses. That's an area of concern.

There's a great deal of folks who are providing other services. In Brampton, there's a manufacturing industry which is still alive, despite the fact that many other parts of the province are suffering. There are still small businesses that continue to exist and to thrive, but we need to do much more than simply providing for this exemption. They're crying out for assistance, they're crying out for more opportunities, and we need to do our best to provide those opportunities for them.

In closing, my first and foremost concern is that this bill purports to be something that supports small businesses. It doesn't, in a meaningful way. It supports them in a small and narrow way, so we need to do more than that.

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Secondly, I ask members of this House to consider what more we can do to provide real supports for small businesses to support innovation. Moving forward, societies will be based on how well we can take our information and our technology and commercialize those and grow those. The countries that are most successful are countries that have taken not only their resource extraction as a means of growing their economy, but have looked to developing technology and creative applications of ideas. That's really the direction that we're headed in as a society, and that is one of the key areas of growth for small businesses. So we need to do our level best. We need to really ensure that we create that climate that encourages entrepreneurship in the areas of technology, in the areas of software development. Moving forward, those are the key areas that we need to grow and we need to support, and moving into a technology industry requires support of small businesses, something that this bill simply does not do in a meaningful way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 105 and respond to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. It is something that I think we've all agreed we can support. I don't know how many times I've had a chance, this opportunity, to stand up and speak to this bill, but I think we're in our 21st hour. We had an opportunity this afternoon—I hope we get an opportunity before the session ends to get this bill passed. It's important to small businesses.

I agree with the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton that we have to do whatever we can to support small business. That includes the kind of investments that we made in education, both in the elementary and secondary panels, and post-secondary. Investing in our people is something that we can do that will help our businesses compete in the economy of the future.

Once again, I support Bill 105, and I look forward to it coming to a conclusion before the end of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to address Bill 105 this afternoon just briefly in my two minutes. Speaker, when we look at this particular bill, it's a bill that's entitled the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It's designed to help out small businesses. As we look at this particular bill, I question, truly, what does this small business act really have to do with small business? They claim that it's going to allow—they want to increase the exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000. Speaker, I have a concern with that particular item, simply because of the fact that—what is that really going to amount to in terms of dollars and cents for small business?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Nine hundred and fifty dollars.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Nine hundred fifty dollars. I mean, that's a small, small start. Now, it's a move in the right direction, but this government is saying, "This bill is really going to help out small business." If they want to really help small business, then they need to take a good, hard look at the current hydro rates that are being imposed upon small businesses.

I look in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, and I get call after call after call from businesses that are saying, "Rick, this global adjustment is killing our business," and it's taking away their profit margins. At the end of the day, if they're not making it, then that means they are going to be losing it. My concern is, you talk about profitability, but then I talk about jobs.

Just back last month—we've all heard about Heinz. We've heard about Worthington Cylinders in Tilbury losing 100 jobs. Hydro rates had a big impact on that. McKesson Canada is downgrading another 65 jobs. So we really question what this bill will do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, as always, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane, and to follow my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton in his discussion on the Supporting Small Businesses Act. I would like to accentuate some of his comments, particularly that the bill purports—in essence, we support the bill, but it purports to be more than it actually is. When I see sometimes during question period the Minister of Finance—"It's time to pass this because this is what's going to save small business"—that's not really quite the case. In fact, the title is much bigger than the bill.

Now, yesterday we heard when the finance critic from the Conservative Party, to my right, was talking about it,

and then we found out that the Conservatives wanted to rename it the Taking from Peter to Pay Paul act, and it wasn't allowed, because that was a mockery. So they also have a skill of trying to make a bill seem more, or less, than it appears.

We, on the other hand, just want to talk about this bill for what it really is, because when we first proposed this idea, the goal was that major corporations that get the same employer health tax discount for the first \$400,000 don't really need it, while small business does. Although the other two parties talk about wanting to balance the budget, we proposed this to show in a small way how you could change the tax system and actually work towards—in a small way—showing how you could balance the budget. Now, by putting this up to \$450,000, they've changed that. Now it's actually going to be a cost.

The Conservatives have said they want to put it up to \$800,000, which would be a big cost to the treasury, so how they're going to balance the budget yet cost the treasury millions of dollars is a mystery to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: You know, Speaker, I was listening to members opposite debate this, and I was struggling to hear anything new. This is what I find a little bit challenging. This bill was debated to death before it went to committee, and then, guess what? It passed in committee without a single amendment. So what was the point of all of that hot air, all of that, "This is wrong; that is wrong"? But you didn't amend it at all: a complete waste of time arguing for 21 hours, and then you passed the bill in committee without any amendments.

It just speaks to the futility of what the opposition was doing in terms of just—I don't know a better way to say it—ragging the puck and delaying the passage of a bill that was timely, because, for heaven's sake, if you were so concerned about all of these shortcomings which for 21 hours we had to hear about—but nothing showed up in committee; no amendments got through.

The bill went through as it was, and I believe that that speaks for itself, that this was a complete—I'm not going to say a waste of time, but really an excessive debate, 21 hours.

Let's wrap it up now. Let's just get this going. What is there to argue? The bottom line is, it's going to help 60,000 Ontario businesses. That's 60,000 families that are going to be helped by this bill. Let's get on with it so that we can move on to doing something more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the points of my discussion—and I hope the members opposite can listen—is that it's not that the bill needs to be amended; it's that the bill needs to be rewritten entirely, that the narrow benefit that it provides is not enough to create the climate to support small businesses. If the bill is called the Supporting Small Businesses Act and all it does is provide a

small exemption, that's not really supporting small businesses in a meaningful way, in a broad way. My criticism was based on the fact that the bill doesn't broadly support a climate for encouraging and supporting small businesses. So that's my concern that I wanted to raise to you.

I really appreciate, though, all the comments from around the House, particularly the interesting take and basically the way that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was able to put forward our position. We looked at ways of providing a tax system that would encourage small businesses, recognize the differences between small and large businesses, and at the same time provide a small but certain step forward towards addressing the fiscal realities that our province faces.

That's the way we proposed this bill. We proposed it as exempting small businesses and not exempting larger ones. That was the initial idea, and I think that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane summarized that quite well.

In my closing 30 seconds, though, what I do want to say is that I have to thank all the members in the House. Today we were able to pass a number of bills, and I really want to thank you all for your support. I appreciate your collaboration. The bills that we were able to pass today weren't because of one member; it was because of all your support. It was unanimous consent, so it was the consent of the House, so I thank you all.

Can we give everyone a round of applause for the great work you all did to make a couple of bills pass that, to me, mean a lot? I thank you all for your support. It was a great thing.

Applause.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

I just want to make it clear that our House leader, a short time ago, just moved to pass Bill 105 with unanimous consent, and of course the Liberal Party of Ontario voted against it.

What I want to read to you is a letter that our House leader wrote to the government House leader, Mr. Milloy, today. It goes like this:

"I take this opportunity to write you regarding Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013.

"The Ontario PC caucus is committed to ensuring that Bill 105 receives passage prior to the House rising on Thursday. This is why I will be moving a unanimous consent motion this afternoon that will ensure that the bill passes tomorrow morning along with two other bills: Bill 58, An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day—a bill sponsored, I believe, by the NDP MPP from Bramalea-Gore Malton—"and Bill 126, An Act to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act"—a bill sponsored by a colleague of mine from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

"These three bills are agreed upon by all three parties in the Legislature and I am hopeful that both the government and third party agree to my motion which will see the swift passage of these bills."

"Sincerely,

"Jim Wilson, MPP

"Simcoe-Grey

"Official opposition House leader"

Speaker, this was introduced not long ago in this House, and, as I say, the Liberal government opposed it. It would have ensured the passage of Bill 105 by tomorrow morning. They voted against it because they're either not in favour of An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day or they're opposed to An Act to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act.

Interjection: I guess (b).

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, after what we've seen so far from the Auditor General today, I'm assuming, and I would be willing to bet, that they don't support Bill 126.

Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, is a piece of legislation that comes at a time when our province continues to struggle with increasing debt, skyrocketing hydro rates, layer upon layer of unnecessary government red tape, increases to WSIB premiums—and, of course, we have the most expensive WSIB premiums in the entire country, as well as electricity. We also have outdated labour policies that prevent our economy from creating more full-time jobs and prospering.

With the amendments proposed within this bill, it seeks to:

- amend the Employer health tax Act by increasing the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000, to be effective in 2014;

- impose a \$5-million payroll threshold; and

- provide special rules for registered charities.

While our caucus supported this bill at second reading, it should be noted that it was the PCs who first introduced the employer health tax exemption back in 1996 as a means of assisting small businesses in reducing their overall tax burden.

Speaker, before I continue, I should let you know that I am going to be sharing my time with another member of caucus, the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London.

The bill raises the exemption for the 60,000 smallest businesses. However, those with the largest payrolls and the most employees, those with payrolls of over \$5 million, will now be paying more under this proposed legislation, as they would no longer be covered under the exemption. This means that companies like Heinz and Kellogg's are actually going to be paying more in taxes—if they were to continue doing business in the province of Ontario. Of course, we know that Heinz in Leamington is closing, and we know that Kellogg's in London announced today that they are closing in 2014. So it's a sad day, again, here in the province of Ontario: 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost, 300,000 more working in the public sector and, of course, 100,000—and counting—private sector union jobs lost here in the province of Ontario.

One of the most common issues facing small businesses is payroll taxes, as they are the most difficult form of taxation to cope with. It limits a business's ability to grow and create jobs. It is because of this profit-insensitive nature that a modest tax savings can be of help. It's a form of acknowledgement from the government that they understand that payroll taxes are in fact some of the most harmful in sustaining a small and medium-sized business's ability to grow in the long term. So I certainly support raising the exemption for our smallest 60,000 businesses in the province, and I think that is, of course, a good idea and one that will help ease the burden that many are currently facing, especially from the skyrocketing hydro rates that our job creators and businesses are facing each day here in Ontario.

One of the best examples from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex: There's a small town in the riding that has a single grocery store. It hires dozens of local people from the community. Of course, their hydro bills now have gone from \$8,500 a month to \$10,000 per month, so a \$1,500 hit over a short period of time. That's going to hinder that business and hinder that company's ability to hire more local people in my rural communities that I represent.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, this legislation could be a good initial step in reducing the employer health tax burden on Ontario employers. Many stakeholders, like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, have advocated for indexing future increases to inflation so as to avoid eroding savings over time and that the government should continue gradually increasing the threshold up to \$800,000, making it in line with other surrounding provinces such as Manitoba.

With there being 42,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario alone, the Liberal government needs to be doing more to support them, and looking into what our neighbours and our competitors are doing would be a good place to start. After this bill passes, Ontario will be at a \$450,000 small business exemption. It would be great for the government to move forward toward \$500,000, \$600,000 or even \$800,000, as outlined by the CFIB.

However, Speaker, in many ways Bill 105 is an example of what this government has failed to achieve in their approach in governing. It has taken them over a decade in government to address and provide relief to small businesses.

A tax break of less than \$1,000 in a year is not a jobs plan. There's not enough decisive action taken to provide real tax relief to Ontario job creators and businesses. Yes, this bill acknowledges a problem exists, but it does not go far enough and just merely tinkers around the edges. Speaker, when will this government come to understand that Ontario requires serious changes and that the time for simply tinkering around the edges has long since passed us by? Now is the time for serious, significant and decisive action to change the direction of our province. Let's be clear: This is not a piece of legislation that will solve the jobs crisis facing Ontario residents today. This bill will not magically bring back 300,000 lost manu-

facturing jobs. This bill will not magically return the one million people out of work today back to gainful employment. It's just simply too small a step, too minor a change. Quite simply, this bill lacks courage.

Of course, the jobs crisis that is facing Ontario residents is one that I'm quite familiar with and one that I've spoken about in this House numerous times before. We have Kellogg's in London this morning—500 jobs lost in the city of London, another hit to southwestern Ontario—and before that, Heinz in Leamington. We've got Caterpillar in London, Sklar Pepler in Ajax, Navistar in Chatham—

Interjections.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: —and the Minister of Rural Affairs, who continues to not listen to this debate, but he has lost Baskin-Robbins in Peterborough and so on.

In fact, there are over one million people out of work in Ontario today. These are one million people who don't have a lot of hope and optimism for Ontario and one million people who know that the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government just doesn't have what it takes to get Ontario back on track.

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Sadly, we have also seen that, over the past 10 years, while we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, government unions continue to thrive and grow under the Liberals—300,000 new government union jobs in the province, but sadly we've seen 100,000 private sector union jobs disappear in the province.

It's quite obvious that this government isn't up to the job of dealing with the jobs crisis. Again, it's a sad day in the province of Ontario when we have another factory and 500 families affected in London, Ontario, today. I would urge the Liberal government to show some respect during this debate for those families and also deal with the seriousness of the jobs crisis in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to co-speak with my friend from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex on Bill 105. I spoke to this quite earlier during second reading. I said it was a good platform to examine the lack of a government jobs plan, which this government doesn't have. I'm going to review how this government's lack of a plan continues to hurt and diminish Ontario's economic potential.

To begin, we face a unique problem in this province. We have a glut of labour, yet businesses face a number of challenges that impede their ability and desire to hire and expand. These challenges include cost pressures, restrictive labour laws, high levels of bureaucracy and high energy rates.

The past few weeks have reminded us, and should have reminded the government, that these factors matter to business, because not only are businesses not wanting to hire, but a number of businesses are simply picking up and moving out of this province. My riding alone has seen over 6,000 jobs evaporate over the past few years with the loss of Sterling, Ford and Lear. Timken is the

newest loss that we've had this past year. Last year, Caterpillar left London, putting 460 people out of work. A couple of weeks ago, we heard Heinz announce that they'll be leaving Leamington, putting over 700 people out of work. And this morning, we learned that Kellogg's, a business that has been located in London for generations, will be moving to Thailand, putting another 500 people out of work.

In the less than 20 seconds that I've been speaking, I've highlighted just under 7,500 jobs that have been lost in and around London under this Liberal government in the last five years. These are part of the 300,000 manufacturing jobs that this government has destroyed across the province since they took power in 2003. This province used to be the economic engine of Confederation, and now we face a jobs crisis—a crisis that this government, with its lack of planning, doesn't seem to be taking very seriously.

The PC Party recognizes the importance of job creation, and that's why we recently offered to clear the decks with the Liberal Party so that we could focus collectively and come together to ensure that we can rebound our economy in this province. We came out and said that there's legislation before this House that we all agreed needs to be passed, and I'm proud to say that we worked with the government to accomplish that. But the purpose of this effort was to clear the way for substantial jobs plan creation from this government. We in the PC Party have put forth a number of common sense ideas to put this economy back on track. They're not partisan ideas; they're simply ideas that put the people of Ontario first. For that reason, we've said that the government should feel free to take those ideas. Unfortunately, the only thing this government has done is brought forward Bill 105.

Whereas the ideas that the PC Party had put forward were bold and decisive, at a time when our province needs it the most, Bill 105 is a safe, almost obligatory bill to show that Liberals care about job creation, but the reality is that they don't. All we have to do is look at how the Liberals bent over backwards to accommodate the NDP during the spring budget season—and their affinity for non-controversial government bills introduced this fall—to know that the only thing they care about is staying in power.

Real leadership takes courage and decisiveness, and with their small bills and array of do-nothing committees, this government has shown they have none. That's the context within which Bill 105 has been brought forward. With over half a million people looking for work, Bill 105 would provide businesses an additional \$75 a month in tax relief—\$75 a month. Hardly enough—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There appears to be an exchange of loud voices from one side to the other. I don't want to identify the individuals; they know who they are. If they would like to continue, they can go outside; otherwise, the poor Speaker is going to be upset.

Continue.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I imagine they're all talking about this Auditor General's report that came out today, a scathing report showing the mismanagement of the continual lack of job planning and spending of our funds. We could go through this report right now, but I will go back to Bill 105, because it is what we're debating today.

Before I was interrupted, I talked about the \$75-a-month tax relief that this bill is going to achieve for small businesses. I hardly think that this \$75 a month would compel any business to expand or hire more staff. However, they did slap an impressive title on this bill, because, for this Liberal government, that's all that really matters.

Now, don't get me wrong. My pharmacy will benefit from this bill. Mine has a payroll of under \$5 million and the increase to the employer tax exemption is welcome. However, the \$75 a month that my pharmacy will save will hardly go towards creating a new job or expanding my business. In fact, it will probably go within two days of my hydro bill.

Since it seems that the government hasn't done any background research on what small businesses really need to grow and expand, it might be a valuable exercise to do that right now. In September, the CFIB released their regular business barometer. The business barometer is an index that CFIB puts together based on surveys they distribute to their members. It's based on a scale of 0 to 100. A score of 50 or higher indicates that more business owners expect the performance of their business to be stronger the next year than owners who expect their performance to be weaker.

CFIB has a lot of experience with this barometer, and it tends to be an economic indicator that investors and businesses look to. In their extensive experience with this number, the CFIB has noted that a score between 65 and 70 indicates that a provincial economy is roughly growing at its potential. In other words, supply and demand of labour is fairly balanced and unemployment is lower.

So what do the numbers released in September tell us? Well, the economies of Alberta, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan exhibit a score above 70. British Columbia exhibits a score of 67. Ontario lags with a score of 63.6.

I remember a time when Ontario led this country in economic growth and business confidence, but after 10 years of detrimental Liberal economic policy, the confidence of our business owners is fragile—and rightfully so, Mr. Speaker. I don't think there's a business owner operating in Ontario in the last 10 years who can forget all the times this Liberal government unexpectedly dipped into their pockets to pay for their reckless spending sprees. No one can forget the former Premier famously pledging not to raise taxes in 2003, only to turn around almost the day after being elected and grab \$2.3 billion from taxpayers. This government also pledged to lower the corporate tax rate to 10% from its current 11.5%. However, they reneged on that promise as well.

When you're running a business, uncertainty is one of your biggest challenges. As a business owner, it becomes

difficult to decide whether to hire an additional staff member when you know there's a good chance the government will overspend and have to come back next year and ask taxpayers and business owners to help cover any shortfalls. Time and again, the Liberals show that they just don't get it.

While we're on the subject of taxes, let's return to the CFIB. Their recommendation regarding the employer health tax has been to raise the exemption gradually to \$800,000. The CFIB recognizes that Ontario businesses contend with the largest employee expenses in all of Canada. So making a significant increase to the health tax exemption makes sense to provide substantial relief and enhance the economic impact of such a policy. That's why my colleague from Nipissing tried to accomplish this at committee stage for Bill 105. Unfortunately, the Liberal and NDP coalition was alive and well that day and voted against it. My colleague, in his effort to salvage this do-nothing bill and make it something that would have an impact, also proposed removing the \$5-million payroll cap.

I personally know many owners of medium-sized businesses in my riding who have payrolls just over the \$5-million mark. As the bill is currently written, they will not qualify for this exemption. These are not major multinational corporations. These are locally owned enterprises that contribute positively to our community every day. But, unfortunately, the medium businesses in my riding, and the ridings of everyone here, will not reap any benefit from Bill 105 because, as I'm sure you can guess, the Liberal-NDP coalition shot down that amendment as well. It's really too bad. The motions proposed by my colleague from Nipissing created an opportunity for the government to provide some real relief to businesses in this province, the very same businesses that Liberals have hurt since taking office.

Mr. Speaker, this bill could have been a substantial bill to help start bringing this economy forward. Instead, we're looking at saving businesses \$75 a month, which is hardly a savings, which is hardly going to create a job, which is hardly going to cause any expansion to occur. They could have done better.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's an honour to stand here this afternoon after listening to all the weighty debate that has gone on on this bill. I'm not standing here to throw mud at the bill. I believe it is a step in the right direction. I think it's a small step, but it will help small business. It will help them a bit, and they could use every little bit of help they could get.

As we all know, small business drives the economy. We've heard repeatedly in here this afternoon about the loss of manufacturing jobs in recent weeks. We've heard repeatedly about London today, about Leamington a couple of weeks ago, about Chatham-Kent and in your community of Hamilton, Speaker, the loss of steel jobs not that long ago.

I don't know that we're ever going to make up for every manufacturing job that has been lost in the past 10 years, but the more we can do for small business, the more we can do to stimulate the economy, stimulate the owners of small business to create more jobs, then I think the better off we'll all be. If we can offer incentives somehow to small business people, maybe somehow come up with ideas to cut the government red tape, to cut the rising energy bills, maybe that will help them get on track for creating more jobs.

We all know we need more jobs in Ontario. It's something I think all three parties would agree on. The question is, how to come up with them? Can we provide our business improvement areas with money to do surveys and studies to find out what their neighbourhoods want? Do they want more jobs? Do they want more restaurants? What do they want in their community?

So I believe it's a step in the right direction, Speaker. I know it will receive support when it comes to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise and to support Bill 105. I was listening very attentively to the comments made by my colleagues from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and from Elgin-Middlesex-London. I want to remind the official opposition members that today in the paper it talks about how our Ontario economy is growing. So you don't have to listen to us. The Conference Board of Canada said, "Ontario will see its economic growth rate jump from a projected 1.2% this year to 2.2% in 2014 and 2.6% in 2015...."

At the end of the day, if the opposition party is sincere about supporting small businesses, Mr. Speaker, then let's have it.

I was very pleased to hear the comments of my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh about supporting small businesses. It is a step in the right direction. I think we need to do everything we can in this House before we recess for the holiday to support small businesses.

More importantly, my colleague from Mississauga East-Cooksville reminded each one of us that approximately 60,000 small businesses across Ontario will benefit from this bill.

So I would like to see which one of us in this House right now does not support small businesses, because if you do, you should be speaking out against this bill. If not, then let's move forward and make sure this bill passes before we recess on Thursday, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, if everybody already suggested that they're going to pass this bill and support small businesses, we should be very honest and truthful about that. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, I've listened patiently to the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London. He is a small business person, and I hope the viewers at home paid attention, because he talked about what it would mean to

him: about \$70 a week in his business. About \$900 per year is what this amounts to.

Look, any relief is a help; we all agree with that. We understand that part. We put the motions forward. But here's the real issue: The \$900 for an employer wanting to hire someone as they're implying wouldn't pay for the newspaper ad for the job. So there really is no help here.

Looking at the energy bills and the global adjustment and other factors in the energy bill, the debt retirement charge, which has been long paid off, this is simply window dressing. It is nothing more than that. It's symbolic. And this is what they're trying to do to us: They're trying to act like we don't—we put amendments on the table to increase the ceiling in line with the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Small Business, to increase that to at least \$800,000. They have done nothing.

I went down to the table and asked for a new copy of Bill 105. Mine has been well used. There was not a single amendment made to the bill in hearings. There were eight amendments, and not one of them was accepted. There's no duty to kind of facilitate or comply or listen to the people of Ontario and the opposition specifically.

I'm very impressed with the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London because he put the voice of small business on the table. He knows of what he's speaking, and I trust what he says. I don't have much confidence in this government doing what they say. Almost every file they've taken, they have absolutely ruined it.

The energy file is only a leading example, and I think I'd like a chance to speak more on this later this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I'm always happy to contribute to the debate on the small business bill, because small business—we've said it here before, over and over again—is the glue in our neighbourhoods. Shopping local and supporting our small business owners only helps to strengthen our communities and our neighbourhoods.

I feel proud when I shop local in my community, in the Argyle community, because I actually have a relationship with those small business owners. Yes, this bill is a very small, teeny, tiny, little step forward, but it's a start. This is what a lot of the patterns of behaviour from the Liberals kind of shows on bills. They open up the window just slightly so that there's some movement, but it doesn't go far enough.

You know, yes, we all agree that we're supporting the bill. It's good that we're all debating the bill, that we have our input. We certainly want to hear from each member if they would like to speak on the bill.

And now the Liberals are talking about how timely things are: "We've got to get this pushed out before Thursday, because the House is going to rise." You know, we had this House prorogued for four months, and that wasted valuable time when we could have put bills forward to help create jobs, to help this health care system, to make life more affordable, and we wasted that away.

So, absolutely, we need to make sure between now and Thursday that the job that can get done gets done, but let's not forget—we can't be cynical about it. We had four months where we just did nothing in the House. I was in the riding. I can speak for my colleagues, because we talked about all the great work we did. We made sure that we got the message out to people that we were there to help them in the work we were doing here in the Legislature in both budget sessions.

So, Speaker, I'm here to support the bill, but it is a very teeny, tiny step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes—and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing might want to listen.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate those who spoke: the members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Scarborough–Agincourt and London–Fanshawe.

I was quite shocked at the member from Durham. When he spoke up, he had the opportunity to discuss the Auditor General's report. He always throws this out here when we're speaking. He spoke to the bill, as he always does—he always speaks to the bill in this House, he never sways away from the topic, but I thought he might just today actually throw in the Auditor General's report. I'm quite proud—I mean, page 2 talks about autism services and how the government is failing our children with autism in this province. That's just at page 2, and I can hardly wait to get through this book.

But I did have marked OPG with their higher energy rates going through. If they wanted to help small businesses in the province, they would actually tackle the problem that is occurring at OPG. My goodness, there's a whole chapter on the amount of money—billions of dollars on their payroll that dwindles down to our rate-payers of this province. They're already being gouged for their energy, let alone what mismanagement is going on with this government in regard to overseeing the bodies that are supposed to be delivering services to this province. That's how you're going to help small business. That's how you're going to lower rates.

1710

We've already seen that they can't manage Ornge. We've seen the fiasco that's going on there. We've seen it over again in eHealth, and we've seen eHealth II in committee. EHealth II is the Presto card system. We're at \$700 million, and we're going to end up with an inferior system to what was proposed. There's one available off the shelf—there are a couple available, probably, off the shelf—that you could purchase, but instead we wanted to go through the route of eHealth again and come up with Presto.

I'm quite concerned. They want to help small business, but they're not going to bother managing what's going on in the government, wasting billions and billions of dollars. Bill 105 might be a tiny step, but again, \$75 a month is not going to help a business owner.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. It's my pleasure to rise today and to speak to Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. I just want to get in the record, though, the number of jobs my riding has lost, as well as some of the other concerns of small businesses in our community.

Since I last rose to speak to this bill at second reading, my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex has lost well over 1,000 jobs. We are all well aware of the tremendous impact that the Heinz closure will have on the people of Leamington. While Heinz has garnered much attention from the media, I just want to make sure that we don't overlook some of the other tragic job losses that have hit my riding under the watchful eye of this Liberal government.

Here's a quote from Blackburn News on November 13, 2013: "The loss of another 100 manufacturing jobs in Tilbury is being called devastating for the small community. Worthington Cylinders announced Tuesday it is closing its Tilbury plant and selling off all assets." Come January, all workers will be out of work.

From the Chatham Voice, dated November 22, 2013: "McKesson Canada is gutting its operations in Chatham. The pharmaceutical supply company has 71 employees working at its Richmond Street distribution centre. When the cuts are done, just six people will be left standing."

In a span of nine days, the riding learned it would be losing well over 1,000 jobs. If that's not enough to convince Premier Wynne that Ontario is facing a job crisis, Speaker, I don't know what is. The truly scary thought is that there may be many, many more to come.

Today we found out that yet another manufacturing plant is leaving Ontario. Kellogg's is closing up shop in London, leaving over 500 people out of a job. Just over a month ago, they cut 110 full-time union jobs and 10 management positions.

Warning signs have been raised all over my riding by a growing number of businesses. I've heard from local businesses that they are having a tough time keeping up with their energy bills and have had to hold off on hiring new employees, if not lay people off. Other businesses have complained about the burden of redundant new WSIB premiums and the impact of the College of Trades tax.

These are real concerns from the real small businesses in Chatham–Kent–Essex. What would Bill 105 do to support them? Well, it would amend the Employer health tax by increasing the exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000, effective in 2014, and impose a \$5-million payroll threshold. We're talking small businesses here. It's been said in this House that this amount would amount to about \$950 a year. Well, it's a start; it doesn't address the issues I hear about every day in my riding.

After hydro rates increased on November 1, 2013, my office received numerous—and I emphasize the word "numerous"—calls from local small businesses. At the

end of the day, they all had one thing in common: Each one was outraged by the fact that the global adjustment fee on their energy bills had doubled, in some cases in just a few months—the global adjustment doubling in just a few months.

Some of these businesses are struggling to stay afloat, and these constant bill increases are pushing them to the very limit. These are the concerns of small businesses in Chatham–Kent–Essex.

One local shop owner told me he was outraged by the comments of the Liberal energy minister, who actually had suggested that when it comes to skyrocketing energy bills for people's homes or our province's job creators, we should just get better at conserving power. Well, these businesses are drowning, and you're telling them to simply be better swimmers? They need a life raft.

What countless struggling businesses of Ontario, large and small, truly need is a government that will realize the gravity of the fiscal situation and make a real effort to improve the environment to do business here. Create the proper working conditions that will attract business. Business comes in; business provides jobs. That's how it should be working. Bill 105 doesn't do that. Bill 105 shows each and every frustrated business owner or concerned employee that this government treats the economy like an afterthought. It demonstrates to small businesses that the government thinks your problem is so small, so insignificant, that it can be whisked away for the small change found in this bill.

What will Bill 105 do for Mike Lenover, owner of Lenover Meats in Chatham? When I debated this bill at second reading, I told Mike's story. He approached me a few months ago with his energy bills, and I was astonished to learn that his global adjustment portion of his energy bill alone had increased by 177%. At that time, he told me that his energy bill was almost equal to his payroll.

As if things aren't hard enough on small businesses, Ontario's energy rates took another hike on November 1. We've also learned, as the Liberals confessed, energy bills for Ontario families and businesses are set to climb even higher. Bill 105 isn't going to do anything to remedy this. The following quote is from a CTV News article titled "Ontario Electricity Rates to Keep Rising as Long-term Energy Plan Released": "Ontario electricity consumers can expect their bills to jump almost 50% in the next three years under the new long-term energy plan unveiled Monday by Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli."

Minister, since I last spoke to this bill, I was approached by a prominent business owner whose total global adjustment charges for the year now surpass their payroll entirely. Mr. Speaker, it's obviously shocking that a business in this province is paying more in global adjustment charges than they are to their employees, with no ability to budget for drastic increases. Keep in mind this isn't even the whole energy bill that we're talking about, but an often overlooked fee that the government seems to increase on a whim—or they allow it to increase on a whim.

Many people in this province look at this Liberal government and see a group that trivializes the jobs crisis by having the audacity to suggest that this one minor bill will actually save small businesses in Ontario. Partisanship aside, I am proud to say that I'm a lifelong resident of Chatham–Kent–Essex, and I have seen well over 1,000 jobs leave our community in just a matter of weeks. Chatham–Kent–Essex and the rest of Ontario are experiencing an economic crisis, and tinkering with the status quo is by no means a solution.

People in Chatham–Kent look to their government for leadership. They expect and demand them to take action when a crisis hits. They see no bold leadership from Premier Wynne's Liberal government. All they see is a continuation of a decade of disgrace that has cost my riding—my riding alone—well over 10,000 jobs since this government came into power in 2003. They see a government that is either not listening to their concerns or simply does not care to act on them. Our small businesses are struggling to keep up with skyrocketing hydro rates, increases to WSIB premiums, additional costs brought on by the College of Trades tax and never-ending piles of red tape. The answer to their concerns is nowhere to be found in Bill 105.

1720

How many more Ontarians must lose their livelihoods before this government understands the severity of the situation at hand? How many more of our friends and family members will in fact lose their jobs before this government truly acts?

Speaker, again, I personally have a hard time agreeing that this act, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, Bill 105, will actually do anything to truly help small businesses in the riding of Chatham–Kent and throughout Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon.

Before becoming the critic for citizenship and immigration on this side of the House, I actually, for the previous two years upon my election victory in 2011, was Tim Hudak's small business and red tape critic. It was great, as I travelled across the province, from Windsor and right into the Golden Horseshoe and through the greater Toronto area, Peel region, up north into Sudbury and North Bay and then made my way through eastern Ontario and up into Ottawa as well, and spent some time in Ottawa, meeting with business owners and chambers of commerce and business improvement areas and hearing their concerns.

I can tell you that there were three or four main themes that I heard over the two years. One was the rising cost of electricity, which we've heard a lot about this afternoon and we continue to hear more and more about from the Auditor General's report, which was released this afternoon, especially focused on OPG and how that has driven our electricity prices through the roof, not to mention what the Green Energy Act has

done. We've debated that many times over and over here in the House. Number one on the list for businesses I spoke with, as I did my cross-Ontario tour, was the rising cost of electricity. That was before the Minister of Energy's long-term energy plan that he delivered last week, which he compares to just a couple of cups of coffee for the people of Ontario. I think it just shows you the disregard for taxpayers' dollars. When \$1.1 billion means nothing more than just a couple of coffees to this government, it's really time to change the team here in Ontario and bring in a government that actually respects taxpayers' dollars. You can imagine what \$1.1 billion could help us with when it comes to health care and education and social services in this province. But back to the bill: The small business owners in Ontario mentioned electricity as their number one concern.

The number two concern that I heard about as I travelled the province as a small business critic was red tape. I think everywhere I went, when I asked a business owner why they weren't expanding their motel—and I remember this one day in Niagara Falls. I was speaking with business owners there, and there was a nice little cafe downtown on the strip in Niagara Falls. There was a nice little motel that had probably been there for 30 or 40 years, I'm assuming, but never experienced any kind of an expansion. We all sat around at this round table discussion and I asked the people that were there, "Why wouldn't that business owner across the street expand his motel to grow his business and hire more people?" As we went around the room, everybody had a reason and many of them were because of provincial regulations as to why they wouldn't expand that business and grow that facility in Niagara Falls. So red tape is killing business in the province of Ontario. We are the most overregulated jurisdiction in North America. And now back to number one again: We have the highest electricity prices in all of North America as well. So we're failing in both of those departments.

They would also talk to me about WSIB and what WSIB is doing to their small businesses. I remember one day in Brant, in downtown Brantford. We were at the old train station. We had a nice cup of coffee there, and there were about 40 business owners there. Many of them were contractors, drywallers, some painters were there, and they were talking about the impact that WSIB premiums are having on their business. Bill 119 is absolutely running businesses underground in this province. We haven't seen anything yet that deals with that from this government.

But what they have brought out is what usually came up as number four on my list of items, and that was high taxation in the province. Bill 105 deals with one of the issues that people would talk to me about, the employer health tax. This will raise the bar a small amount. This is a minor, baby step. Sure we're going to support this, but it's like putting a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. This is not going to fix the problem that small businesses are having in Ontario. These guys make this out to be salvation: This is going to get business back in business

in Ontario; Bill 105 is going to get us back on the right track. It's not going to do anything of the sort.

Our member from Durham said just moments ago that Bill 105 is going to bring in about 900 bucks into the coffers of a small business in Ontario. Do you think that's going to employ people, Mr. Speaker, 900 bucks? How many employees could you hire for \$900 a year? I hope not very many.

This is just not going to fix the problem that this government has created in Ontario. Every day, we pick up the newspaper, and every day there's another business—not just a small business; they don't make the newspaper, but they're going out of business every day. But the big businesses are going out of business every day. What this bill does is actually rob Peter to pay Paul. That was one of the amendments that our finance critic tried to make during discussions at committee. That's what's happening with this bill. They're actually making the bigger corporations or the bigger companies—and not even large companies; companies with a payroll of more than \$5 million—pay more to offset this token for small businesses. That's what this is. So it's not doing anything really to create jobs. As a matter of fact, it's hurting the big guys.

As I was saying, you look at the newspaper every day. You look in London this morning, and right on the front page there's the big Kellogg's factory. It's closing down in London: 500 people out of work in London. It's not a laughing matter, and it's not the first time that London has been affected. I can tell you that Leamington is devastated by the news of a week and a half ago or two weeks ago when they announced that Heinz was closing. It's because of the inaction of this government that these huge employers in our province are leaving to go to the States. In some cases, they're going to Quebec, or in some cases—God bless New Brunswick. I love New Brunswick. That's where I was born. But in some cases, they're moving to New Brunswick.

When I left New Brunswick 20-odd years ago to come to Ontario, this was the land of opportunity, Ontario. I came here because I knew I was going to get a job here in Ontario. There was all kinds of opportunity here. Can you believe now that the tables have turned? New Brunswick is a thriving province that's attracting businesses in from Ontario and other jurisdictions, and Ontario is a have-not province.

It took 10 years under the leadership of these guys for that to happen. Ontario is now at rock bottom. I can't believe it. I can't believe that this has happened. That's why I decided to get into politics: because these guys don't have a clue on how to run the economy. They bring in little trinkets like Bill 105 and think that that's going to get the economy back on track.

You've heard it time and time again, Mr. Speaker. We've cleared the decks. We got rid of their fluffy bills. Some of them have some merit, but none of them are going to create jobs in the province of Ontario. The finance minister stands up every day and talks about the fact that the official opposition isn't supporting Bill 105,

and that's what is going to get the province back on track. That isn't going to do anything to get the province back on track. There are some small business owners out there who, sure, will take the \$75 a month. They're happy to take anything that they can get out of this government, but it's not very much.

These guys have run our economy into the ground. They're responsible for the fact that we're now a have-not province. They're responsible for the fact that our province hasn't recovered from the global recession like the rest of the provinces in Canada have. Why are we stumbling and fumbling and the other provinces are doing extremely well? Whether it's Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, BC—they're all doing better than Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Ontario can't get its act together because these guys have no direction.

1730

The Premier is running up a hill in a commercial. Where is she going? Nobody knows. Nobody knows where she's going, Mr. Speaker. She has no idea herself what her vision is for this province and how she's going to get us back on track. I'm thinking she's running around in circles, Mr. Speaker. That's what I think. She's running around in circles, and we're going nowhere but further and further into the ground under the leadership of this new Premier and the Premier who came before her, Dalton McGuinty. There's no difference between the two of them. We must do better, Mr. Speaker. We need more than Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane and talk about Bill 105, small business. We've said quite a few times that the problem with this bill is that they're looking at a very small, little issue, and small business relies on large business, and large business and small business rely on services. That's why I want to get back to services, like the services that are provided in northern Ontario by the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.

If you remember, in March 2012, this government announced, "We are going to divest, and it's going to save \$265 million." Today, we learned from the Auditor General that it's going to cost \$800 million minimum—\$800 million minimum—to kill the services on which northerners depend.

Now, what else we learned from the Auditor General is that when the announcement was made in the budget, they hadn't contacted anyone: no stakeholders, no small business, no large business—they didn't even contact the people at the ONTC. What is that? What is that?

At least with this one, with the ONTC, we have time and they have time to actually back up and make decisions based on what northerners say, on what stakeholders say and what the facts say on services on which we depend, and to make decisions, as opposed to a quick political, "Oh, yes, the bean-counter says we'll just—

we'll fool them, and we'll say we'll save \$265 million." You keep on this track, it's going to cost \$800 million minimum to kill services. Does that make any sense to you, Speaker? It doesn't make any sense to anyone in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased, on behalf of the residents of Ottawa South, to speak on Bill 105 again, as we get close to our 22nd hour.

I do want to say there's a small business in my riding of Ottawa South right next to me in the mall called 3 Sisters. It's a small operation. It has changed the neighbourhood. It contributes to the neighbourhood, and they're going to benefit by this.

I think it's important to remember that we seem to all agree on this, but what's happening is we seem to be debating a whole bunch of other things. The members opposite enjoy talking about the rising hydro rates and how they're an impact on business, but it's a case of selective memory.

Now, if you'll remember, the members opposite left us with a \$40-billion stranded debt. They had a failed deregulation of hydro, okay?

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: No, they did. You know that.

They failed to invest in infrastructure—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please.

The Minister for Rural Affairs, I can't believe it. You're actually out-shouting your own speaker. I can't even hear him. Maybe you want to cut it back a bit so I can hear the guy on your side speaking.

Continue. Thank you.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll try to be louder.

But going back to the selective memory on hydro and the failure to invest in the key infrastructure in hydro, which this government has had to do: Even their own leader last week said, "I can't make hydro rates any lower." You know why he said that? Because he's going to add \$40 billion to that debt by building new nuclear that we don't need. That's the commitment that he's made.

I'd also like to remind the members opposite who like to talk about jobs that in 2008, when it came time to support our jobs in the auto industry and the jobs associated with that industry, the members opposite voted against that. I want to remind them of that, so the next time they stand up, maybe they can give it some deep thought.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have to say that I've already used my 20 minutes on this, so I can only do two-minute hits. But I want to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. He brought the point of view from his riding. I commend him because he has suffered exten-

sively because of the job losses in his area, and he's outlined that very clearly today. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings spoke with considerable passion, and I think he really summarized it very well. It's so little, and it's too late.

Actually, in Ontario, here's how they create small business: They start with a large one, and they keep taxing it and imposing regulations on it so that it becomes a small business, until it disappears.

This isn't me saying it. The report just last week from the manufacturing competitiveness committee of the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council—they said it right in here, and I'm going to refer to it. For the viewers at home, you can get access to this report, on pages 27 and 28. It says right in here that one of the recommendations is to cut back on the red tape—right in this. They also said that energy plays an important role in the cost of production.

More importantly, the most recent report by Roger Martin on the competitiveness, productivity and economic council—it's the courage of correction. This report outlines that Ontario is 14th in North America. It used to be first; it's now 14th. States like Michigan, which is in trouble, are ahead of us. These are the signals of Ontario's economy.

The energy report, the long one, Achieving Balance, is another case of the Minister of Energy, in his arrogant way—and I use that collectively—lecturing the people of Ontario that it's going to be a couple of Tim Hortons coffees. This is the attitude, the insensitivity and the lack of caring that's killing Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. Questions and comments? Someone finally stood up: Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other parties don't seem to want to join in this debate too extensively today.

I'm glad to stand up and speak on Bill 105 and follow the comments of my colleagues from Prince Edward-Hastings and Chatham-Kent-Essex, who eloquently put out the argument that \$900 a year is not going to save small business. Sure, it's a little band-aid. I can say to my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings, as a former nurse, you're right: A band-aid on a bullet wound is not going to solve the problem. It's not going to solve this problem. They have eloquently put it, and I hear it constantly in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. The cost of hydro is putting businesses out of business. They're going south. It's putting people out of their homes; I say that repeatedly. It is the number one thing we hear.

This government likes to put in bills with very fancy names. I think this is going to end up being the Supporting Small Businesses Act—all very nice. But \$900 a year is not going to save a small business from leaving Ontario.

The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex has the classic example and has fought so hard to reverse the Heinz plant closure. Why is Heinz leaving? The hydro

costs are part of it. It's this Liberal government's constant over-regulatory burden on businesses. It's one more tick in the box of why you don't stay in the province of Ontario. The member from Peterborough can smile over there, but I can tell you GE is not too happy. General Electric is not happy; they've announced layoffs.

There are serious problems, structural problems, with this Liberal government and how they treat small businesses in the province of Ontario. The outrageous hydro rates are probably the number one thing we hear. This bill, while it helps a little bit, is just a band-aid on a bullet hole that is not going to work, as my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings has said.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me that two-minute hit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're more than welcome.

The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks very much to the members from Durham and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for their comments; Timiskaming-Cochrane as well and the member from Ottawa South, too.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Businesses are struggling in Ontario, and for some reason, these guys on the other side of the Legislature just don't seem to get that. They've buried their heads in the sand. They don't want to hear the truth.

1740

I've heard so much about this Queen's Park bubble that exists, and I think that the cabinet ministers live inside that bubble, and they never really get outside that bubble. They hang out together, people pat them on the back because they want to get favours from the government, and they don't actually hear from the real people on the ground who are struggling. Those are the people we hear from. People come into my constituency office all the time.

I've been out across the province, meeting with people at small business round tables, for the last two years, and I haven't run into very many people, if any, who have said to me, "Things are just fine here in Ontario. Let's continue down the same path that we're on, running around in circles with the Premier." They want to see a change in direction, and Bill 105 isn't going to be the answer to their prayers. They're praying that something happens in Ontario, and Bill 105 is not the answer to their prayers. Yes, they'll take the \$90 or the \$75 a month; they'll take the \$900 a year, and maybe they can afford an extra radio ad, or they might be able to afford half a newspaper ad, but they're not going to be able to employ more people.

We have a plan to create jobs in Ontario. These guys are hanging on for dear life, and they're about to get a rude awakening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to speak to the third reading of Bill 105. It's interesting that we're still

debating this bill, because we had proposed a solution earlier today. Our House leader, Jim Wilson—who was successful in having Bill 133 and Bill 111 passed, by making a deal with the government that some other private members' business would pass—made a motion in the House today on bills that we believed would be supported by everyone. Certainly, we know that An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day, Bill 58, sponsored by the member from Brampton, Jagmeet Singh—I'm not sure of the rest of his riding—and Bill 126, An Act to amend the Fiscal Transparency Act, by my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Laurie Scott, which was supported by all parties during private members' business—the government unfortunately did not support it. So here we are back debating this bill, which we support. But we also support our right to debate the bill.

My colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings spoke about it earlier: The government has gone on ad infinitum. The finance minister stands in his place during question period and talks about Bill 105 like somehow that is going to be the panacea to all of the economic problems facing Ontario small business. What it amounts to is about \$900 a year. But it's going to mean that the opposite effect is going to happen to medium-sized businesses across this province, where anyone who has a payroll of over \$5 million has no exemptions whatsoever. So it's going to affect medium-sized businesses across this province. For every dollar saved in a small business, there are going to be more dollars taken out of other businesses. The reality is that it's just robbing Peter to pay Paul, a proposition on the part of the government to play a little politics with legislation in the chamber. That's all it is: playing a little politics in the chamber.

You know, when I talk to small businesses in my riding, they talk about what we have been talking about mostly in the House here in the last few weeks: the cost of electricity and what this government has done to increase it over their tenure here in the past 10 years—astronomical increases in electricity.

I get emails every day from businesses across my riding, from businesses across Ontario, wondering whether or not they can continue under this regime. I get emails, and I've got one in front of me. It's quite long, and I don't think I'll read it all, but this is a person who lived in Manitoba and moved to Ontario. Well, you want to talk about sticker shock, folks? They lived in Manitoba and came to Ontario, and they're comparing their hydro bills. Monthly peak charges incremental, including taxes: In Ontario, on-peak, the monthly base charge, including taxes is \$28.13; in Manitoba, \$7.54. For 1,000-kilowatt-hour per month use, this equates to a bill of \$250.13 in Ontario on-peak, or \$186.13 off-peak, versus a bill in Manitoba of \$83.94.

And then—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew might want to sit down; we have a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of the holiday season, I know you know the rules very well, but I would just reference standing order 23(b), where we're not discussing matters other than what should be debated right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I would say that the member is connecting hydro to the cost to small businesses, and I think he's within the area of acceptability.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, thank you, Speaker. I think that's been part of the conversation all afternoon, and I would hope that we're not going to play this game for the next 13 minutes, but if we do, I will engage. I will sit down when you stand, and I'll stand back up when you allow me to, and if they want to keep bringing in points of order, have at it. But I think what it really amounts to, Speaker, is that they don't want to hear the sad, sad story of their record.

You know what happened last week? I personally like the Minister of Energy; I think he's a decent guy.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: A good guy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He is a good guy, but he has been sent out to do an awful job: to try to sell the electricity policy of this self-serving government.

So he comes out—and we don't agree with the numbers whatsoever; we're going to have our own analysis shortly. He comes out and says that the costs of cancelling two power plants and relocating them, \$1.1 billion, as ascertained by the auditor of the province of Ontario, is like, "Folks out there, don't get your knickers in a knot. It's only going to cost you a cup of coffee a year." Well, as my old colleague from Welland would say, horse feathers. They cannot back up those numbers. They make those numbers up the same way the Premier makes up numbers every day.

When she is confronted with job losses, like she was confronted with the hundreds of job losses at Kellogg's in London today, or like she was confronted with the hundreds of job losses at Heinz just a few short weeks ago, she starts to spout out these numbers, and you can make them tell you whatever you want. There's the truth, and then there's the numbers that the Liberals want you to believe, and they just make them up every day. I've been here long enough to know that whatever story is required to get those people off their back, that's the one—did you see those people in the under press over there, the ones that write all those notes? That's their job. It's like, "Just get the wolves off the back of the Premier. Give her something to say." So she comes up with these job numbers that she purports have been created somewhere.

1750

It is cold comfort to the people who are facing a very bleak Christmas in many of these communities across Ontario—cold comfort, I say to you, Speaker, and that's got nothing to do with the weather. Because I'll tell you, it is going to be a very sad day for those people when they have to tell their kids, "You know what? Santa

Claus ain't coming this year," because the Premier of Ontario has failed in her duty to provide the kind of environment in this province that will allow us to create jobs and to help small business. Bill 105: They keep talking about small business, Peter—Speaker—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Peter? He used to be your colleague—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was thinking of St. Peter, because he might be the only one I have left to call on, because when the people call on you people, the gates of heaven are closed.

Speaker, I want to talk about some folks in my riding, and I'm going to read an email. I'm going to read something as soon as I find it here. It was sent to the Minister of Energy some time ago, and I don't believe there was ever a reply to it. But anyway, here we are: "Premier Wynne, Mr. Chiarelli"—and I'll omit the name of the business, but they're about ready to pack up.

"As facility manager of our plant, I am responsible for the monitoring of energy usage, including our electricity purchases and programs for load reduction. We have upgraded our lighting systems, motors and several of our drive systems over the past few years in an attempt to reduce power consumption, only to see these reductions gobbled up by the ever-increasing hydro rates. We constantly face cost-out demands from our head office as a means of being as competitive as possible in a very tough market." This company "employs between 80 to 140 people at our site during the year and we are one of the major industries in the town of" X. "This past month has been one of the highest months"—this was written in October, so it was about September—"for the global adjustment charges on our hydro bill, and our energy costs are now running 35% over budget due to these out-of-control costs. The hydro debt retirement and the global adjustments are accounting for 50% to 60% of our monthly hydro charges. The continuing spiral of hydro costs are having a dramatic impact on our overhead and are raising concerns from our head office.... Something has to be done to get these costs under control and possibly reduced before we become another industry that"—here's the key word, Mr. Speaker—"used to be in Ontario.

"This issue needs to be raised in the House as we are not the only industry being crushed under these high costs."

It is very sad, these kinds of emails, when I get them—very sad when I get these letters and these emails. I can tell you that I received another one from the same business just this week, and it reads:

"John,

"After watching the latest announcement about the Liberal energy policy, we are just sick. These fools think that they can have hydro rates increasing at these high rates and expect industry to stay in Ontario. They need their heads read! I know you have heard this from me several times before, but you need to pass on these sentiments in the House. Every year we are being asked to reduce overhead costs by corporate yet essential

services, such as electricity, are rising at insane rates. To keep on investing in green power when we can't use what we produce is ludicrous. They say to purchase off-peak power to reduce costs. Well, we run 24/7 at least for now, and cannot work any differently"—I can go on and speak more about this particular business, but I think you get the message, Speaker.

So while this government talks about the importance of Bill 105, which is going to mean—it wouldn't mean anything to this business; in fact, it's going to hurt this business. But it's going to make a little dent for a small business to the tune of about 75 bucks a month, or 900 bucks a year. But in the meantime, those businesses are getting hit with hydro increases that dwarf that.

As my colleagues from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and Prince Edward-Hastings said earlier, it's like putting a band-aid on a bullet wound. I would make it even worse. A bullet wound is rather surgical. It's zoom—like that. It's like putting a band-aid on an attack by someone wielding a machete. That's what it's like. People are being hacked to death by this government and their insane hydro policy, and they want to flip them a band-aid and say, "Oh, but look at what we've got. Good news coming down the pipes here, folks. We've got Bill 105. We've just got to get it through the House. And you know what? We're going to raise the ceiling on your health tax by \$50,000, from \$400,000 to \$450,000 of payroll. On the first \$450,000 of payroll, you're not going to pay tax," except if your payroll's over \$5 million, then you're going to pay tax on all of it.

We actually proposed some sensible amendments that would actually help small business. Our finance critic, Vic Fedeli from North Bay, the member from Nipissing, proposed that we would raise the exemption to \$800,000, and this was supported by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the CFIB. He proposed that we raise that exemption to \$800,000. Now, that would double the exemption, from \$400,000 to \$800,000. That would have some real impact on a small business. But what happened at committee? They turned down that amendment. They turned it down.

We brought an amendment that would remove the part of the legislation that now makes anyone who has a payroll over \$5 million pay tax on all of it and we would still continue with the exemption for those companies. They're creating jobs. What happened to that amendment? They turned it down.

We brought forth some really good, solid amendments that would have made this bill better, would have made it stronger, would have made it a better piece of legislation to help small businesses, to help all businesses, and the government said, "No, won't do it."

In spite of that, because we believe that half a loaf is better than nothing at all, we decided we would support this legislation even at third reading and we would hope that it would get through. So we put forth a motion for unanimous consent that would have passed this bill today. And what happened? The government said no.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It was a poison pill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not a poison pill, but pieces of legislation that you people supported in private members' business. This is the duplicity that we deal with, Speaker, on a daily basis from this gang over here. They—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, this is what we deal with on a daily basis. At private members' business, they support Laurie Scott's bill—I sit down and you stand. That's right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's good, and you might want to withdraw that one word you used. It's unacceptable. It starts with a "d."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdrawn. Thank you very much, Speaker.

So they speak out of two sides of their mouth when they say—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're having a bad day. Do you want to withdraw that one, too?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw that one, too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's right, and now you're finished, because the time's up. Thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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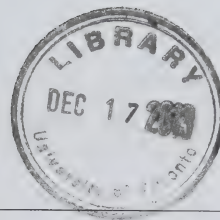
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Deuxième session, 40^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 11 December 2013

Mercredi 11 décembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 10, 2013, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke still has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I believe I get another 20 minutes—oh my goodness, I'm down below two. I do not have as much time as I expected. I finished the debate yesterday, but I wanted to start it today.

Of course, we saw the auditor's report yesterday, and that doesn't give us a whole lot of solace as to the kind of mismanagement and blindness that's going on in this government.

I think at the end of the day, when it comes to the electricity bill, this government is going to regret their arrogance, is going to regret the way that they treated the people of Ontario, particularly last week, when it was the government's position that they as much as scoffed at the public, saying, "What's the problem? So we blew \$1.1 billion on some gas plants. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. It's only a cup of coffee a year." First of all, the numbers are wrong. But, Speaker, it's the attitude of those people over there that somehow \$1 billion should just be forgotten.

Let me put it to you this way, Speaker. If the Royal Bank is robbed—a guy comes in and steals \$1 million from the Royal Bank; let's say \$1 billion—across all the depositors, it may not mean much to each depositor. There's a lot of money in that bank. But I'll tell you this: When they catch that crook, he's going to jail.

What happens to the people in this government when they take \$1 billion and put it onto the ratepayers? Apparently nothing. They laugh and say, "Don't worry. Be happy. It's a cup of coffee a day." I think they will rue the day that their arrogance got the better of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions or comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to speak in the House and to follow the whip of the Progressive Conservative Party, whom we affectionately call "miracle whip."

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's cool whip over there.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Cool whip, here.

In speaking about small business, what I would remind my friends to the right here is that, really, what we want to do is see this bill move along at this point, so we're happy to do questions and comments. We will not be putting up other speakers to it; we would like to see this put into action before the break.

If this Liberal government really wanted to do something for small business, there's a whole lot of things they could do, this bill being a very tiny step in that direction. In fact, small businesses are hurting way more than they ever have. All you need to do is speak to small business to discover that simple fact. We had pushed for a lessening of the business education tax. They met us halfway on that. But certainly more needs to be done. MPAC assessments on businesses are now completely outrageous and through the roof. That is an agency that needs overhauling. Other agencies do as well.

This is a government—and of course the Progressive Conservatives are in league with them—that can quickly get together their forces to pass a bill like the EllisDon bill. That can happen in a couple of weeks. But when it comes to doing anything for small business, of course it takes months, if any action is taken at all. We know this is a government of the mall and not of Main Street. We know that the Progressive Conservative Party says they are for small business but actually support big business; i.e., again back to the EllisDon bill. What we would really like to see is somebody standing up for Main Street, and that's what we in the New Democratic Party stand up for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to comment on the honourable member's speech. I unfortunately did not hear the first part of it yesterday, but listening today, what I didn't hear him mention was the fact that if this bill is passed, 60,000 small businesses in Ontario will have their taxes cut starting January 1, 2014—it actually seems to be a cry that I hear from the opposition all the time, to lower taxes, particularly for small businesses. So I'm standing here a little bit confused as to why the PCs are not wrapping up third reading debate.

We've had several hours of third reading debate. I stand to be corrected, but I believe there were 16 hours of debate at second reading and the bill has not been amended at committee, so it's essentially the same bill. My question to the honourable member is: Can we wrap this up? Can we pass this bill and allow small businesses to have their taxes cut?

I totally respect the fact that the opposition may have more things to put on the record in debate, which is why I gave them an opportunity on Monday night and Tuesday night, and indeed, I will give them an opportunity tonight to sit till midnight, with a commitment that we will call this bill so that every member of the PCs can put their thoughts on the record about how important it is to cut taxes.

With that, Mr. Speaker, questions and comments: My question is, why can we not either let this bill pass or allow us to sit till midnight so they can all speak and then allow the bill to pass?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here for the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke yesterday, and he was, to some extent—there was so much yelling back and forth that he was distracted, unfortunately. I hope I didn't participate in that, although he did give me a little slap on the wrist on my way out.

But he did make the point that if this reduction in the onerous taxes on small business in Ontario was that good, our position was that they should have increased the threshold. Our critic Mr. Fedeli said it in committee. We moved eight amendments, all of which were turned down. One was to increase the threshold. This bill does \$400,000 to \$450,000. Our suggestion: If it's that good, increase the threshold to be exempt up to \$800,000.

But the really punitive measure in this—it's very important for the viewer to understand this, because most of the Liberals don't understand it—is that once you reach a threshold of \$5 million in payroll, you don't get any of the exemption. So it's actually an increase on the upper scale. Now the reduction in taxes they're talking about is about \$60 a month, which won't pay for the global adjustment on their electricity bill. So it's a tax on a tax that they're doing in the first place.

I think that even the NDP, in all fairness, realize that small business in Ontario is the only business left. I looked at the media today. The latest headline—important, if people get their Globe and Mail; a good article here—talks about “Kellogg Plant a Casualty of Changing Tastes.” Well, the changing tastes are the taste of this government's punitive action on business in Ontario. That's the story.

The electricity bill—electricity is non-discretionary consumption, meaning you have to use it. Now they've increased the price to the extent that it's putting people out of business. That's the reality. It's putting people out of their homes, potentially, and I'm quite disappointed. Bill 105 should pass if, for instance, they'd just look at some of the amendments we put forward.

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always great to stand here. I've listened with some intent here this morning to the comments made by my fine whip, Mr. Yakabuski, from the great riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and of course Mr. O'Toole, from the great riding of Durham. We had a lovely breakfast this morning, and I want to thank him for his companionship on that.

The NDP pointed out that our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, is against small business; we're for big corporate business. Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that the Progressive Conservative Party is for all business. We're for employment; we're for getting good jobs back here in the province of Ontario. The policies that the Liberal Party is putting forward are detrimental, and I'd like to say what the member from Durham pointed out: that the high, skyrocketing price of electricity is driving manufacturing out of this province. Our leader, Tim Hudak, made the very good point that these are not jobs that are going to Indonesia, China, Brazil or developing economies; these are good, middle-class, paying jobs that are going to Ohio, Michigan, New York, stateside, into the province of Quebec and elsewhere.

This Liberal government shows no responsibility, no accountability to the taxpayers. We've seen scandal after scandal come forward in this House, whether it's Ornge, eHealth or the gas plants. Mr. Speaker, this government needs to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park—the whip of the third party, who I affectionately call cool whip—and the government House leader, as well as my colleagues from Durham and Northumberland–Quinte West, for their comments.

I want to respond most directly to the House leader, who didn't hear the address yesterday, but we talked about it extensively. First of all, we made an offer to the government to pass this bill yesterday. The government turned us down. We understand that. So we offered yesterday. The other thing is, we also brought amendments to clause-by-clause when it was in committee—government House leader, you must be aware of that. We were going to raise that threshold not to \$450,000 from \$400,000, where you're changing it by \$50,000, but to raise it to \$800,000 so that all payroll up to \$800,000 would be exempt from your punitive health tax—which, by the way, you brought in as the biggest tax increase in the history of Ontario.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I remember that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I remember when you promised not to raise taxes.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You have a very selective memory, I say to the House leader.

We brought in that amendment. You know what happened? The government said no. They turned us down.

We brought in a further amendment—because they made a change here so that everybody who has a payroll over \$5 million—which is like those folks who are losing all the jobs at Heinz and Kellogg's etc. They're going to lose any exemption for the punitive health tax that the McGuinty Liberals brought in so many years ago, after promising not to raise taxes.

So if you're going to have a memory, I say to the House leader, you can't be so selective. Your record in supporting business of all sizes in this province is deplorable, and they're voting with their feet. Shame on you.

It's about time to bring a jobs plan into this province. Tim Hudak has one. Why don't you take a look at it?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to speak to Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. Of course, that's the tax that the McGuinty government imposed in their first term in office, as was mentioned by my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. When they were just elected, they imposed this tax on the people of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member for Nepean–Carleton.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Explain it outside.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I spoke to this bill during second reading debate. At that time, I spoke about the wide array of problems with this bill. Sadly, through the whole process—and we had hoped this would happen in committee—nothing changed; no amendments were accepted.

For instance, first the government has not addressed the new limit on exemptions. With this bill, any company with a payroll over \$5 million will no longer be eligible for the employer health tax exemption. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine a company that's looking to expand and their payroll is \$4.5 million? They can't afford to expand because at the point they get over \$5 million, they now have to pay the employer health tax for all their employees, and that increases their cost of production. Again, that was an amendment that needed to be made and nothing was done. In other words, it's a tax increase for companies that employ many Ontarians. The more they employ, the higher the tax rate.

Just yesterday, we saw another 500-plus jobs lost at Kellogg's in London. That is on top of the Heinz closure in Leamington, devastating a town and costing nearly 1,000 jobs because the climate for doing business in Ontario was not conducive to keeping those plants there. The closure of CCL Industries in Penetang, costing another 170 jobs—and just last week, we lost another 650 in Bradford with the closure of the Faurecia auto parts plant. Again, all these plants are closing and the production is going somewhere else, south of the border. These are all large employers that would see their taxes increase with the passage of this bill. If these large companies are

leaving now, imagine what will happen when we increase their taxes again, Mr. Speaker.

When policies like this are combined with increasing hydro costs and red tape, it's amazing any of these businesses can survive in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please.

I don't get it. They're quiet; the third party's quiet. Your gentleman's standing up doing it, and to three people I've had to say, "Be quiet." Let's have a little respect for the person speaking. Come on, you guys know better. You can go outside and talk about this. I can't even hear him for you two are right beside him—and he's in your own party.

Carry on.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate those comments because I do believe it's an important issue, and I would hope that my colleagues would be listening.

I just want to say that when policies like this are combined with increasing hydro costs and red tape, it's amazing any of these businesses can remain in Ontario. We should be encouraging growth and creating policies that welcome investment and business to our province, not new taxes like the ones in this bill that drive companies away.

I just want to point out, as was mentioned by the government House leader about not talking enough about the benefit in this bill for small business—I want to say that I do support the bill based on it will help small businesses. But I'm pointing out the challenges we are facing with businesses that are not small or small businesses that are trying to become larger businesses.

A few weeks ago, when I spoke to this bill at second reading, I brought up the story of Dale Hurley, a local entrepreneur in Oxford. He started off by sorting pop bottles and then opened his own grocery store in Ingersoll. That store grew into a superstore that employs 185 people. With the new limit on the employer health tax exemption in Bill 105, Mr. Hurley would no longer be eligible for the tax credit. Why? He employs too many people.

Our province is in a time of need. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under this government and had the lowest wage growth of any province in Canada. Instead of encouraging local small business owners to become successful like Mr. Hurley, we're telling them, "Grow, but not too much." Mr. Speaker, this bill will cost a lot of jobs.

To fix this, we proposed an amendment to eliminate the \$5-million cap on the tax exemption; however, the government voted down that amendment in committee. The government voted to raise taxes on our province's largest employers.

The second major problem with this bill is that the increase in the employer health tax exemption is so small. It will only raise the exemption by \$50,000. At a decent job, that's one employee. That is not significant to

help people stay in business; that's not enough to help Ontario's companies. This bill is not a plan for revitalizing the economy; it's just grandstanding.

The exemption was created to help ease the tax burden on small businesses. If a company is on the brink of closing, this increased exemption will do very little to help.

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The non-taxable \$50,000 in this bill wouldn't have kept Kellogg's in London; it wouldn't have kept Heinz in Leamington, CCL in Penetang, Xstrata Copper in northern Ontario, Faurecia in Bradford, US Steel in Hamilton, Caterpillar in London, E.D. Smith in Seaforth or CanGro in St. Davids. Not one of those would have been saved by this bill or would have been positively impacted by this bill. Every one of those would have been negatively impacted by this bill. Sadly, they're not there anymore to be impacted at all.

If a slight increase in tax exemption is the best this government can do to keep jobs in Ontario, sadly, we'd better get ready for more closures. Instead of just pointing out problems with Bill 105, our party put forward solutions. Instead of a meagre \$50,000 increase, which may save some companies a maximum \$1,000 a year, we proposed an increase of the exemption to \$800,000. By doubling the exemption, thousands of additional businesses would experience savings. Imagine how a small business would benefit from a \$400,000 increase.

We are not just putting forward bills with nice names. We're not just focusing on public relations. We're not just holding conversations. We are putting forward concrete proposals that would help businesses grow and create jobs. Our party continues to bring forward policies that have a meaningful, positive impact on Ontarians. We have released 14 white papers with detailed plans for improving our province, including the manufacturing sector. Businesses agree with our position on this bill. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business wrote in a letter that "Ontario's employer health tax exemption threshold should be comparable to that of other provinces and it is our standing recommendation to have it gradually increased to \$800,000 over time." That's from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Despite our efforts to help strengthen our manufacturing sector, the Liberal members voted down our amendments in committee.

So let me sum it up. This bill will tell small businesses that growing is a good thing, unless you grow too much. This bill should be renamed. This bill should be called the "supporting small businesses unless they become too successful act."

I ran a small business in Oxford for nearly 30 years. I never had to operate a business with all this unnecessary red tape and today's skyrocketing hydro costs. The average Ontario household will see their hydro bill increase by \$30 a month, according to the Minister of Energy. That's \$360 a year for the average home that uses 800 kilowatt hours a month. Businesses and manufacturers use far more than 800 kilowatt hours a month; Heinz used more, CCL Industries used more, Kellogg's used

more. For the few companies that qualify for this exemption increase included in this bill, the minimal savings will not be offset by the extra hydro costs.

I've heard from many farmers in Oxford—some of our very small businesses—about the rising cost of hydro. They are affected by these burdens, too. Some 97% of Ontario farmers reported that they are affected by the recent hydro increases, and 60% said that the impact was going to be significant. The point is that increasing a tax exemption for small businesses by \$50,000 is nowhere near enough when the government is still increasing operating costs for those very same businesses.

The Premier has told the agri-food businesses that they need to double their output, yet she is doing nothing to address the challenges that they're facing. Some 70% of them told me in our survey last year that they are significantly impacted by rising hydro rates. One of those, incidentally, was Heinz in Leamington. They filled out a survey and said they had problems with red tape and they had problems with the escalating hydro costs and it was becoming harder and harder to maintain their status in our community in Leamington.

When asked about the closure—and this is to Heinz—Warren Buffett, who owns Heinz, said, "It's really a question of having an unprofitable plant and concentrating production in a more profitable plant.

"The tomatoes are going to go to the plants that have the low production costs."

Since it wasn't Leamington, again, we must remember why it was that they left. It was because of the burden that government puts on that plant.

Ontario hydro prices are too high and still increasing. That is directly responsible for the loss of jobs in our province. Despite this, the government wants to raise taxes on large employers with this bill. It just doesn't add up.

Another burden small businesses are facing is the increase in red tape. As I mentioned, that was one of the things Heinz said was problematic for them. There are over 380,000 regulations on small businesses. There are countless government forms to fill out. For small business owners, every minute they spend filling out government forms is a minute they spend losing money. This bill does nothing to address these problems.

The Alliance of Ontario Food Processors recognized this when they wrote in their October report that the regulatory burden "often obstructs growth initiatives, investment, and speed to market."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business agreed. In fact, this January, they will be promoting the fifth annual red tape awareness week. Red tape suffocating small business is a massive problem. The CFIB reported that 68% of farmers and 62% of small business owners are discouraged from growing their businesses.

The increase of a tax exemption does not address the fact that small business owners are being tied up in red tape. On average, an Ontario farmer spends nearly four standard 40-hour workweeks on government forms. The employer health tax exemption should be raised because

the businesses are having to hire people just to fill out this paperwork.

Red tape and hydro costs are two of the major burdens hurting small business. Although the tax exemption may help, it is far too little. It's a band-aid solution to a significant problem.

The PC caucus recognized this. We tried to fix this bill through amendments by doubling the exemption from \$400,000 to \$800,000 and eliminating the cap on larger employers. Both of these amendments were rejected by the government, at the expense of our small business owners. Bill 105 does not address the larger core problems business owners are facing every day. Before any more businesses close their doors, this problem needs to be solved today. Standing here talking about making these small changes is not going to help save the businesses that are on the verge of going out of business.

The act may have a good name, but it's not good policy. Ontario's small business owners and taxpayers expect more from this government. They have a right to expect more from any government. They have to have a plan, a jobs plan that will help them not only maintain—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville—a little loud.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman:—maintain their status as of today, but to create more jobs. As was mentioned in a number of the other ones I've already mentioned, if we have an environment in this province that is not conducive to investment, not only will we not get new investment to get more jobs here, but we will even lose the investment that we already have.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the last day this Legislature will be sitting before Christmas, unless of course the government agrees to extend the session, as we've asked. For many people this is a happy time of year, but not for the families in Leamington who are facing unemployment; not for the families of those who work at Kellogg's—people like the woman who tweeted yesterday, “My dad amongst 600 fathers/mothers who just lost their job announced in the holiday season from the billion dollar company—Kellogg's,” people like the single mom who said yesterday, “We were told a month ago there would be some layoffs and cutbacks but everything would be ok. Now they tell us right before Christmas. Where are we going to go? There's no jobs around here.”

They're wondering how they are going to pay the bills by this time next year. These are the people who got their notices this week at Kellogg's. They don't want to spend money on Christmas presents because they don't know if they need to save the money to keep the lights on or to keep the house heated.

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It's not just the employees; it's the small businesses that are suddenly seeing that customers aren't coming in and aren't spending money, and wondering if they will survive. It's the farmers who no longer have a market for their tomatoes. It's the many suppliers to the plant—this is, of course, to the Leamington plant for the ketchup fac-

tory. This bill does nothing, absolutely nothing, to help those people.

Instead, I want to repeat the request our leader, Tim Hudak, made yesterday: Let's extend the session for a week so that this government can finally table a real jobs plan, one that will help those families.

Every week, it seems that we hear of another plant closing, another business leaving Ontario. The government has said that Bill 105 will help these companies but, Mr. Speaker, I have not heard from a single company that has said, “I was going to close my doors, but now that the government is increasing the exemption just a tiny bit, I'm going to stay.” It just isn't happening. Instead, I'm hearing from businesses who are saying, “With these high hydro costs, with the red tape, with the cost of doing business in Ontario, I just don't know how long I can keep going.”

One of the Kellogg's employees said yesterday, “There will be a trickle-down effect on the whole area. There seems to be a mandate to bring a lot of business back to the United States.”

I heard from one food processor who said he and his wife are struggling to keep the company going, and that he hasn't been able to buy a new suit in years. That's the sacrifice that our hard-working small business owners are making, Mr. Speaker. They deserve more from this government. They deserve a real plan to help grow business and create jobs. They deserve a government that is willing to make the tough decisions, put off Christmas break, and for once put the interests of the people first.

Red tape and hydro costs are two of the major burdens hurting small business. Although the tax exemption may help, it is far too little; it's a band-aid solution to a significant problem. The PC caucus recognized this. We tried to fix this bill through amendments by doubling the exemption from \$400,000 to \$800,000 and eliminating the cap on larger employers. Both of these amendments were rejected.

Bill 105 does not address the larger core problem business owners are facing every day. Before any more businesses close their doors, those problems need to be resolved. The act may have a good name, but it's not good policy. Ontario's small business owners and taxpayers expect more from government; they expect a plan.

I would hope that my presentation will have helped further the mindset of the government, that they will consider making sure that we stay for another week and they come forward with a jobs plan that will actually address some of the challenges that we're facing—not only to have a plan that will help the people who have already lost their jobs, but to do everything we can in this place and in the province of Ontario to make sure that we stem the tide of the ever-increasing speed by which our plants—particularly our food processing plants—are closing in this province of Ontario. I would hope that we can work together to help those people so at the very least, next Christmas season is a little brighter for the people who will be losing their job between now and then.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to have a few words on Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this House on behalf of my constituents in Timiskaming-Cochrane. And for myself, it's an incredible honour to be able to follow my uncle. Over the years, I have often asked my uncle for advice, and I've listened intently to his words—some of which I agree with, some of which I don't. But I'm going to ask a few questions.

He said several times that this bill is not good policy. Yet yesterday, his party moved a motion to pass it, and because they put a couple of other things in, the unanimous consent motion didn't go through. If they are intent or satisfied to pass this bill, why do they continue to put speakers to it? Perhaps he could explain the procedure to me, but if they quit putting speakers to it, debate would collapse and we could have a vote.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, they are saying they have to debate the bill, but yesterday the party was willing to let the bill go through without further debate. Yet today, we are back to debating.

Mr. Michael Harris: John, nobody cares about the process.

Mr. John Vanthof: And obviously, some of the members of the Conservative Party say that no one cares about process. Some of us, who actually take this Legislature seriously—the New Democrats do take this process seriously. And I also believe that my uncle takes this process—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down.

It's getting a little loud in here. I'm going to yell order, then I'm going to start getting a little serious, okay? So cut it back a bit, and no cross debate. You know to go through me. Okay? Continue.

Interjection: You're out of time.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh. Sorry, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to agree with the member for Oxford. He made a very important observation. He was talking about Kellogg's, and he said—and he's absolutely right—that one of the big factors in the closure was government red tape. And I have to agree with him. Government red tape is a huge problem. It's interesting: In the Globe and Mail today, in the business section—it's page B10, second paragraph in the bottom article. Mr. Myers, the senior executive at Kellogg's, describes Ontario as very competitive and fairly competitive on all fronts. He said that we're one of the best jurisdictions to do business in the world. When asked about why Kellogg's was closing, he pointed to the federal government.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Now the Tories hate to hear this, but let me say why he's closing. It is the federal government's red tape at border crossings and foreign affairs and international trade that is obstructing—the third paragraph, the president. So it is the federal Con-

servative government's border regulations that are causing the problem. He then identified the second reason why they're closing: the higher Canadian dollar and federal fiscal policy and monetary policy.

So if you are so possessed and you think—and you're right. Why don't you phone your federal cousins? These people in the opposition want us to adopt the American policy—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: A 7% reduction in Kellogg's US operations, a closure of a plant in Australia—we have twice the job creation rate of the United States: a 173% recovery compared to 85%. What they're producing and what their federal cousins have already caused is a growth job rate that is half of what ours is. They want us to go back and adopt the policies of Mr. Bush and the right-wing Conservatives that plunged us into this recession.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You're right. It's all about your red tape.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The minister, when I say “thank you,” knows what he has to do, doesn't he? Thank you.

The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully and respectfully to the member from Oxford, and I have great regard for his concern and his understanding of the agricultural or agribusiness sector, having served for some time as the Minister of Agriculture for the province of Ontario and worked, indeed, with the federal government on many of the risk management programs that we do enjoy in Ontario today. But he does make the relationship for jobs in agriculture, when he's trying to tie it in to the unfortunate Christmas decision at Kellogg's.

I would say the Minister of Infrastructure had part of the story—it was two lines in this half-page article, which I'm reading. This is the article in the Globe and Mail that he referred to—and I have great respect for him. Now the headline in the paper—the minister should be listening to this, through the Chair, of course. It says, “Rising Energy Costs a Concern for Ontario Manufacturers.”

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He skips over the real evidence from all of the businesses in Ontario that we're hearing.

We're fighting over the newspaper. I read as well as you do and have great respect—and I think he's ignoring—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister had his time, and now he wants to take the member from Durham's time. So we'll be quiet, won't we? Thank you.

Continue.

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Mr. John O'Toole: I think, really, another point that was made here was the sort of thoughtless response by the Minister of Energy. The Minister of Energy, when

asked about the 42% increase in energy costs, in his response to the poor people at that time—I'll read it here shortly. It says that "Minister Bob Chiarelli said last week that for the average family, the \$675-million cost of cancelling the Oakville ... plant works out to a cup of Tim Hortons coffee—or a 'miniscule' \$2 a year...." That's how they think of things—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and that's why we're still talking about this bill.

Thank you for the extra couple of minutes—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for stretching it another 10 seconds.

The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I did listen to the speech made by the member from Oxford, and one of the points that he and many of his Conservative members have proposed is that we increase the exemption of the employer health tax from \$450,000 to \$800,000. This is the party that eliminated \$13.4 billion of corporate tax cuts in an eight-and-a-half-year period, including income tax cuts to the very wealthy, and they are now pursuing the same course by saying that the exemption should move from \$450,000 to \$800,000, which would be a loss to the treasury of half a billion dollars every year.

Now, I know these folks believe themselves to be good fiscal managers. They haven't been, in our experience in this Legislature, and they're proposing to add half a billion dollars to our debt without any evidence that in so doing we would be creating jobs. There has been absolutely no evidence that in having lost \$13 billion under their watch by their former Premier Mike Harris, it created any jobs whatsoever, and they continue to pursue a logic that simply hasn't worked and doesn't work.

I wonder whether the member from Oxford could cite any evidence that could show us that perhaps they're moving in the right direction with that proposal, because we New Democrats believe it's wrong-headed. We think that keeping the threshold at \$450,000 is a good thing. We had proposed \$400,000; the Liberals decided to move it up to \$450,000, but to do anything more than that, we believe, is not reasonable, sensible or practical, and I wonder whether the member from Oxford could speak to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford has two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, the member from Durham and the member from Trinity–Spadina for their comments.

Obviously, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was very generous in his comments on a personal basis, so we will have a pleasant Christmas dinner at least over that. But I just want to point out that he mentioned the fact that we should quit debating because everything had been said. As I said in my presentation, I will be supporting the bill when it gets to third reading, but I think

it's really important, I've learned over the years that I've been here, to talk for the people who are negatively impacted by this bill and who would be losing their jobs or have lost their jobs and to talk about what we could do to prevent that from happening. That's why I think it's so important that we have this debate and continue to have this debate, so that every member who wishes to speak to it has that opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents and the constituents that are affected by these things. So thank you very much for your kind comments, but I thought I should explain that.

The member from Trinity–Spadina asked a question, too, and I would ask him, in turn, to point out where tax increases on business have ever created a single job. I can say and I can assure you that your number will be lower than where tax cuts have created jobs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford might want to talk through me.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —and a comment to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: I think it's rather interesting that he did miss the main part of the story, which is the ever-increasing cost of doing business in Ontario. In the Heinz survey I got back, that was the number one thing they said was going to make it difficult for them to maintain their business or to grow their business in Ontario, and obviously the end result of that was, it didn't happen.

The other thing I would just point out to one of my colleagues—and I just want to put it on the record. He talked about the exchange rate. I want to point out that in 1977, the Canadian dollar was worth \$1.15. Both Heinz and Kellogg's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —survived that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —and they can't survive this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you means thank you.

Point of order from the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'll ask for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oakville has asked unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bill 105.

Is it the pleasure of the House that it carry? I heard a no.

Now we have another direction to go in: Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, debate should continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: The government has asked for more debate, so we'll give them that.

It's an honour to stand here and speak to Bill 105. I think, as my colleagues have previously stated this morning, including the member from Oxford, it's our opportunity to actually speak on behalf of those folks who are affected by the bill. I'm glad I have the opportunity to stand and speak to this bill, as it actually does impact many of the folks in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga in a variety of ways. Obviously, the bill would propose to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years, with the amount to be adjusted each year starting in 2019.

It was interesting, though: The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure talked about the fact that he's blaming the federal government for some of the previous plant closures we've heard about this week. It's quite sad. Over the last few weeks, in fact, we've heard about the plant closures of Heinz, putting some 400 people out of work in Leamington, Ontario; and yesterday, of course, the 500-and-some hard-working Londoners who will be displaced at the Kellogg's plant. That announcement came right before Christmas, obviously, throwing a wrench into hard-working families' plans as they come upon the Christmas season, a season of spending time with family. I know the member for Oxford had an opportunity to dialogue with his family member here, and I'm sure there will be more vigorous debate over the turkey and stuffing in his household with regard to this bill.

I find it interesting: In fact, I believe we were to debate Bill 91 this morning, the Waste Reduction Act, but that was pulled for some strange reason. I really do believe it's the cumulative effects, such as Bill 91 or Bill 105 or the Green Energy Act, that actually are driving businesses out of Ontario into other jurisdictions. The member for Toronto Centre talked about the fact that it's the federal government's fault.

You know what? I'll give you an article that was posted by Chris Vander Doelen on Saturday: "Who Really Killed Heinz?" It talks about Bill 91. "Was Ontario's blue box recycling program the final blow that killed Leamington's Heinz factory and its 740 jobs? It was at least a factor in the company's decision." We've talked about Bill 91 being a massive new regulatory scheme that will impose massive new costs on food producers, manufacturers and consumers, just like Ontario's Green Energy Act killed potentially four jobs for every job it created, according to former Ontario—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, here we go again. Your member's up, and we've got three sidebars. The member from Halton, the member from Burlington and the member from Durham, we've got three sidebars when your member is speaking. I can't even hear him. It just seems to be a pattern. Can we please keep it down? If you want to have sidebars, go outside. It would be nice to hear your member speak. Thanks.

Go ahead, member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. It actually gave me an opportunity to notice the clock. I initially thought I was speaking for 10 minutes, but I'll take the 20 for sure. I know my colleague from Durham is always looking for more time, so he did pass off a few articles here. Hopefully, I'll get a few of those on the record for him.

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What I was really going back to was an article by Chris Vander Doelen in the Windsor Star on the weekend, talking about the unfortunate loss of 740 jobs at the Heinz plant and a new bill that was potentially to be debated this morning, Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act—that cumulative impact, adding a new regulatory burden on perhaps manufacturers, especially within the food and processing segments of our economy. We heard the devastating impact of more jobs being lost out of Kellogg's yesterday in London.

Chris Vander Doelen goes on to write here, "As I wrote about Bill 91 back in August, 'It will probably cost thousands more Ontarians their jobs in the private sector when its full effects finish cascading through the economy.'"

It goes on to talk about the fact that the government hasn't performed a cost-benefit analysis on particularly Bill 91. As I had mentioned earlier, the auditor stated in his report on the Green Energy Act that there was no cost-benefit analysis done.

You look at Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It's those cumulative effects that eventually—businesses look at their overall expenditure in each jurisdiction and say, "Hey, listen, we're no longer competitive here compared to plants elsewhere."

Look at some of the local manufacturing facilities in my area of Kitchener—Conestoga. Long-time, entrenched employers in my community like Kitchener Frame, formerly known as Budd Automotive, just down the street from my place on Homer Watson—you drive by, and the plant is levelled; there are heaps of concrete and rebar. They're ripping that place down. At one time, it employed 3,000 people. They shut down April 23, 2009.

You look at the BFGoodrich plant around the corner from my house as well. It made tires for years, employing thousands of people. Where did they go? They moved to the United States.

Just recently also, just down the street, Knappe and Vogt, formerly Waterloo manufacturing—over 230-some people—the plant has relocated. Where? Grand Rapids, Michigan.

We're shedding these jobs left and right out of our province, and why? Well, of course, the minister will blame it on the federal government, but we have to take into consideration high hydro rates and the regulatory burden on employers.

Bill 105 actually discriminates against or impacts employers with a payroll over \$5 million. These folks are the ones employing people in communities like London or Leamington.

So back to the bill: We talked about the fact that the Ontario PC caucus is the only party with a real plan to

free businesses from the tax and regulatory burden this government has placed upon them so that they can actually create new jobs and make investments—not only creating new jobs, but retaining the ones we have. Sometimes we hear about creating new jobs, but what are we doing to retain the jobs that are here? Time and time again, we're hearing small, little announcements here and there, but what is the government doing to retain those good jobs in communities like Leamington, Windsor, London, Kitchener–Waterloo, Belleville and northern Ontario?

We need an actual plan. We've actually called for the House to continue sitting next week so that the government can bring forward a jobs plan that addresses the real concerns, the real issues that employers in Ontario actually are facing—not symbolic bills that do nothing, like shutting down the coal plants, which is already happening by the end of 2014, to make sure Al Gore and his friends are happy. That's a symbolic move that isn't really required. They already have the tools necessary. We don't need symbolism; we need action—today, now.

As I said, this bill—we obviously have some issues with it. We'll be addressing it as we continue on further.

As my colleague from Nipissing stated in his time, he rephrased the bill and called it the “supporting small business while we stick it to them in a hundred ways act.” That's what I would officially call the bill. I know the government likes to throw these fancy names on the bill, but that's what I would call it.

This government, day in and day out, dreams up new revenue tools. This is a tax-and-spend government or, more precisely, a “spend first, tax later” government. This government in the last 10 years has doubled our debt. It took 20 Premiers and 136 years to reach a debt of \$139 billion. Today, in just 10 years, our debt is \$273 billion. That's more than double, Speaker.

I know the temperature dipped quite low this morning on my walk in to work, so folks will have their heat, no doubt, fired up right now at home. We naturally expect our energy bills to rise, but this government decided to tack on an additional cost to our energy bills, starting back on November 1. How is this government supporting small businesses when actually, they're taking two blows to the knees, in the month of November, for businesses' energy bills?

Ten years ago, we paid just 4.4 cents a kilowatt hour. With the global adjustment, we now pay double that at 8.72 cents a kilowatt hour. You know what? It's like telling mom or grandma to do their laundry at 2 in the morning. We can't go to our manufacturers and say, “Hey, put everybody in the lunchroom during peak hours and we'll come back and make the cereal at off-peak hours.” It just doesn't make sense. In fact, the government is using our electricity sector to support a range of shifting policy objectives without credible examination of whether burdening the electricity ratepayer with the cost of such initiatives is economically efficient.

Just yesterday, we heard about the waste at OPG, top executives making an absurd amount of money. The pen-

sion ratio of 4 to 1 or 5 to 1 is insane. I mean, hard-working Ontarians having to foot the bill for that is absurd. They come to me and say, “What the heck is going on? No wonder my hydro bill is going up.” These guys are making crazy amounts of money. They reduce their overall employee base by 8.6%, yet the pay for these high-paying executives goes through the roof. The waste is unbelievable.

The power plants: People say, “A billion dollars to not even generate one kilowatt of power? What is that going to cost me?” Somebody should be in jail, yet not one person was demoted or fired; yet you, the taxpayer, will continue to pay.

I talk to a lot of folks, small business people. When we bring up the health tax credit, we talk about the College of Trades. This is another government priority that, unfortunately—they should be encouraging good job creation and stimulating economic growth, not creating new fees and more barriers for our workforce. Instead, the Liberals created yet another organization with additional fees for small business called the College of Trades. This trades tax has driven up the cost of doing business for professionals working in more than 155 skilled trades. Barbers, hairstylists, they're like, “Why do I have to pay this? This is crazy.”

WSIB premiums—this was last January: WSIB coverage for independent operators, sole proprietors, partners and partnerships, and executive officers of corporations is no longer optional; it's now mandatory. Bill 119 captured more small business people to pay mandatory premiums, who would be unlikely to ever claim for injuries. It's small business people who have construction companies. Office employees, who will never go to the site, are now forced to pay this. Many of them complain, saying that they've already calculated this risk into the cost of their business and have their own insurance to cover them, should there ever be an incident.

We talk about Bill 91. Of course, we heard earlier this year about the tire tax, another tax targeted onto hard-working Ontario farmers—the massive tax hikes this year that we've seen, the Drive Clean program continually gouging Ontarians when they go to renew their licence. I mean, the cost goes up and up.

But Speaker, I want to go back to Bill 105. The proposed bill, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, just doesn't do the job of fixing the last 10 years of wasteful spending and the price we've had to pay on countless Liberal scandals. Perhaps the Liberal government should be more interested in helping small businesses than in putting their own interests first.

Apologies do not get us out of the red. Unfortunately, the Premier has had many of these to give, but I don't see our credit rating going up each time she holds another press conference to say sorry. Instead, a culture of entitlement has been fostered by this government at the cost of hard-working Ontarians—as I had mentioned, the \$1 billion-plus cancellation of the power plants, but also the \$1 billion wasted over at eHealth to fund flights around the country and PhDs, and the hundreds of millions of

dollars wasted over at ORNGE. We've heard more about that, and I'm sure we're going to hear more about ORNGE this morning. This is truly disturbing, when people are dying because of improper decisions made by executives, who shouldn't be spending our tax dollars on lavish Christmas parties or fancy boats or Harley-Davidsons. Speaker, this is not only backwards, but it's just plain wrong.

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As I mentioned, the Auditor General reported yesterday on the waste over at OPG. But her first opportunity to speak before the Legislature was a report that she had done on the cancellation of the Oakville gas plant, the seat-saver program that cost roughly a billion dollars, tacking it onto the hydro bill of Ontarians and those small businesses and employers across Ontario who will eventually have to foot that bill.

Speaker, overall Bill 105 hurts the ability of businesses to compete in the global marketplace by adding to their input costs. It supplies special rules for registered charities and for a group of employers associated with the registered charities. It allows the minister to make regulations providing for special rules that apply to employers who are or are associated with registered charities. We have concerns, of course, about the minister's ability to make subjective changes through regulations around these charities when they cannot properly manage the public purse.

It's similar to Bill 91. We asked the government to table a cost-benefit analysis, or asked them if they'd done one before tabling such legislation. We have not been able to get an answer, of course, on that, and that's probably why the bill was pulled today: a lot of negative publicity with regard to adding more costs to manufacturers, especially in the food processing industry, which we've heard has shed some major jobs this past week at Kellogg's and Heinz just a few weeks ago. To do these cost-benefit analyses, to do the proper research—they're like, "Hey, don't worry. We'll figure this out later." Well, that's not good enough.

Businesses need certainty. The uncertainty of new regulations is truly what's frightening employers across the province. It's that uncertainty that could come at any time—hydro rates, regulatory burden, administration and paperwork—that's all involved in this.

So we talked about those concerns. This bill, like hundreds of Liberal self-serving policies, doesn't support small business like it should. We talked about the changes—in fact, we asked for the bill to be passed yesterday, but we talked about the changes that we felt were necessary to bring that threshold up much further so that we're not penalizing those employers who actually pay the bills and support hard-working families in Ontario. By bringing it from \$400,00 to \$450,000, you're actually hurting the folks that have payrolls over half a million dollars. It's crazy to think.

The member for Oxford mentioned some comments from some folks within the riding and some of the comments on the hard-working folks at Kellogg's who have

worked for decades at the plant and who will, unfortunately, have to weather the storm and will be out looking for new jobs. In fact, London, Ontario, is one of the jurisdictions that has one of the highest unemployment rates within Ontario. We hope for the best for those folks to ensure that they're able to support their families throughout the year.

Again, we've called for a jobs plan. We're asking the government, let's sit another week. Let's see what they've got. Instead of tabling symbolic legislation, we've asked for a credible jobs plan. We've even said, "Hey, steal ours." We've talked about this. We've proposed our ideas through our recent white papers. I encourage the government to have a good look at those, and we're happy to have them steal our ideas.

Now is the critical time when we need the government to act. Far too often, we read headlines: in Windsor, talking about the departure of Heinz from Leamington's; just yesterday, the Kellogg's plant in London; Bick's pickles, gone; Knappe and Vogt, from Kitchener; Kitchener Frame, formerly Budd; Schneiders Foods, a major local employer in my area, and more than 1,200 hard-working folks within the Kitchener-Waterloo area will be affected by that; John Forsyth Shirt Company; as I'd mentioned before, BFGoodrich, which made tires; E.D. Smith; Sunoco; Lance Canada; Ledco in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, just around the corner. These folks are packing up, not to ever be back.

You drive down Homer Watson Boulevard in Kitchener and you see the old Budd plant that employed up to 3,000 at one time. I remember the guys just packing the Tim Hortons in the morning, going for coffee; they're nowhere in sight. It's being ripped up, and they're putting a commercial plaza in. Those well-paying jobs will never be back there again, employing some 3,000 people at one time.

That's why we're asking the government to bring forward a plan. We'll give them an extra week to see it. They can steal our ideas all they want, but we have to act now. To sit there and blame the federal government on border crossings and the high Canadian dollar—as my colleague stated, in the 1970s the Canadian dollar was over \$1.15. Did you see Heinz and Kellogg's running out of the province then? What is the dollar today? It's below par and yet they're departing. That argument is not valid.

Interjection: It's moot.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's moot; you're right. It's a moot argument.

What's more important is the regulatory burden that we hit to our businesses; the high hydro rates; the labour policies that we have in Ontario that are archaic. It's just a cumulative effect that eventually drives these businesses out of Ontario.

I'll wrap it up there. I look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues, and we'll go from there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise in this House on behalf of my constituents in London West and respond

to the comments from the member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

I've only been in this House since September, so a relatively short time, and I have to say, I've seen some wonderful things happen. I've seen members from all three parties join together to identify priorities and to move forward to make sure that there's legislation in place to address those priorities.

But I have to say, I am somewhat confused by the process, by the political games that have been played on this important piece of legislation. We've all agreed that it needs to move forward. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga has commented that this Legislature should be focusing on jobs. My community has been devastated by the loss of jobs at Kellogg's. We need to make sure that the business of the House is moving forward. Instead, despite all the debate that has taken place, we see the PCs continuing to put up speakers to this legislation when we have all agreed that it's important, that small businesses need it and that it should move forward.

I'm learning a lot about what goes on in this place. I'm not too sure about the strategy that's behind this, but I really think that we have identified something that would help small businesses in this province and that we have an obligation as MPPs who represent our communities to try to move forward and take action when we can. This legislation should be passed now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important matter in response to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

There is an article from the *Globe and Mail* that has frequently been mentioned as it relates to Kellogg's. Let me read the entire paragraph for fairness' sake, so that we're not picking and choosing a sentence here and there. This is what this very important, critical paragraph says: "Energy costs, which are relatively high in Ontario and going up, are a concern in Ontario, Mr. Myers said." That's Jayson Myers, the president and CEO of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. "So are labour costs, though he said the province is fairly competitive with other jurisdictions. The bigger factors are the still-elevated currency, which has put companies at a competitive disadvantage, and regulations surrounding border crossing that drive up costs for businesses."

That's the quote, Speaker. I just wanted to let you know that even the business groups are saying that federal jurisdictions around border crossings is a major concern.

Now, this is comments and questions, so I do have a few questions for the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, through you, Speaker, and also to the other members of the PC caucus who have been talking about this issue of taxes in Ontario.

1010

I want to know: How did the PC Party vote when it came to Ontario reducing its corporate income tax rate

from 14% to 12%, and then to 11.5%? I would like to know how the PC Party voted when we reduced the small business corporate tax from 5.5% to 4.5%. I want to know how the PC Party voted when the Ontario government totally eliminated the small business deduction surtax from 4.25% to zero. I also would like to know how the PC Party voted when we totally eliminated the capital tax on all businesses, whether they make money or not.

I would like to know the answer to these questions, because the answer is "no" every single time. I would like to know why they voted against those tax cuts that would help businesses in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen respectfully to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga. He did speak and tried to relate the impact on families at this time of year, not just at Kellogg's but Heinz and other people who employ good-paying jobs in Ontario. Let's keep it at that level, because, quite honestly, the Minister of Labour just spoke; he doesn't realize just how hard it is for the people of Ontario.

It's not just the electricity price. It's not the cup of coffee that the Minister of Energy said. Even your remarks are inaccurate. You actually had promised to reduce the corporate tax rate and backed away from it. You should understand your own policies. It's a failed experiment. They actually have no consistency and certainty in their policy. That's the real issue here: Consistency, certainty and stability would encourage investors in the province.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga, in fairness—and, I thought, with a very positive tone—talked about the 15 white papers that we have out there. We've actually cleared the decks legislatively, as has been said many times. Yesterday, a couple of bills put forward by our House leader, Jim Wilson, and our deputy House leader, Steve Clark—in all good sense, these were bills that the government had messed up administratively.

On the law society reforms, they should have had that in here and done with long ago. They left it to the last minute because they're managing in chaos. That's the lack of stability and certainty here, and that's what's driving investors out. That's not specific regulatory issues; this is a government that has no plan.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, raises the question every day. In fact, he has offered, as you know, Speaker, to sit an extra week to work on the jobs plan for Ontario, yet they won't even give us the time of day. On this bill, we moved 10 amendments to increase the threshold. They turned them all down.

I can't trust this government. That's the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. Questions and comments. Seeing none—you just made it under the bell, the member from Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I will try to get up a little bit sooner next time.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: His knees are bad, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, I'm having some difficulties.

I have this report in front of me this morning. It just tells the people of Ontario how well this government is doing—all the waste and all the scandals they've been involved with, and it just keeps growing. They have no jobs plan, and certainly this Bill 105 doesn't help that situation at all in Ontario.

I don't know what the definition of a small business is. My friend who sits to my left here said that if you want a small business in Ontario, you start with a big one first, because under these policies you're going to get a small one.

I want to tell you about a business that I know a lot about, that was started in 1993 and had as many as six employees working for this small business at one time. It was just a mom-and-dad business. When 2008 came along, it was the first time they ever had to lay off their employees—the first time.

Now, I'm not blaming the government for the recession of 2008-09. However, I must say that every year since, these employees have had to be laid off. Thankfully, they come back, and this business is very thankful for that, but the business still has to lay these employees off, because some of the bigger businesses that this company used to do business with are cutting back. There's no incentive to spend any money for this small company to work for them, because they're trying to save their dollars.

There is no confidence in the economy of Ontario right now with all these plant closures going on, so that trickles down to these smaller companies. I know this company rather well because it's the company that we have; it's the company that my wife runs right now.

I need to sit down. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I do appreciate the comments from the members from London West, I believe the Minister of Labour chimed in, of course the honourable member from Durham—always thorough with his questions and comments—and of course the member from Perth—Wellington giving a real-life example of a long list of scandals that this government has had happen over the last 10 years. I said, "Randy, you've only got two minutes. The list could go on and on and on." But I think it's important.

I know I had an opportunity to speak to Bill 105. I know Bill 91 was up for debate this morning, but I'll give you a bit of an insight as to the type of legislation these folks are bringing that actually impact businesses. I'll go back to the article written by Chris Vander Doelen in the Windsor Star on the weekend. That's got a lot to do with Bill 91. In a letter that was actually written to the environment ministry from Heinz—and I'm going to quote the managing director of Heinz. He called it "unacceptable" that the Wynne government intends to pass Bill 91 before its new regulatory powers are defined, and before the industry can figure out its significant effects on production, operations and their legal obligations.

"Basically, Bill 91 throws food producers into a complex and expensive new regulatory world that nobody yet understands. As an example of how vague the law is, he points out that it even lacks the definition of a food 'producer,' and does not define who will be affected by its powers.

"While the government says it will set those definitions after the bill passes into law, 'the process of consultation cannot proceed without knowing clearly who is obligated by the act....'"

So they're always, like, "Let's legislate first, ask questions later." No, that's not how it works. That's how you're affecting businesses. The member from Windsor should be concerned about this. It is concerning that the government has no intention of considering those economic effects before they bring in such legislation.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to introduce my nephew, Liam Bradford, who has joined us in the gallery today and is a constituent from the great riding of Parkdale—High Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? I'm guessing maybe the member from Parkdale—High Park? No? Okay. The member from York South—Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to welcome to Queen's Park today Constable Jim Lambe, crime prevention officer at 12 Division in Toronto; and Barbara Spyropoulos, head of the community police liaison committee at 12 Division and resident of York South—Weston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome to the chamber this morning my executive assistant, Merv Richards. Although Merv has worked for the party in various capacities for over 20 years, he's never attended question period in the chamber. It's his first time today and I want you to give him a big welcome.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to again welcome Harold Wilson here from Thunder Bay. He made the trip in from Thunder Bay to be here in the Legislature today and is sitting in the members' west gallery.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome a number of young people from the Iranian Canadian Youth centre in Richmond Hill and Thornhill. They're students at Richmond Green and Thornhill secondary schools: Shahab Ghayumi, Milad Eghdami, Amir Saman, Saeed Eghdami, as well as Arshia Rahimi, Sohrab Esmaeil-Pour, Kiana Esmaeil-Pour, Mahnaz Zandvakili and Alborz Arshak, as well as Shahram Saremi.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome the family of the Ottawa—Centre page, Amy Falkner: Amy's mother,

Julia Martin; grandmother Elizabeth Martin; and aunt Kathy Lacroix are here in the chamber. They were here earlier in the morning. I'm sure they'll be back for question period.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome to the chamber today Joell Ann Vanderwagen. Thank you for coming and welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today we have Olga Radchenko, who's with the government relations firm of Hill and Knowlton. We want to welcome her to Queen's Park today.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais présenter à l'Assemblée aujourd'hui M. Denis Vaillancourt, qui est le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, avec Peter Hominuk, qui est le directeur général.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It gives me great pleasure to welcome kids from the Iranian Canadian Youth Organization, sitting in the gallery. The organization provides a forum for youth to come together and to engage in community work.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As I look around, I notice that these people aren't here yet but I would like to mention them. We're having Rondeau day here at Queen's Park with Dr. David Colby, Dr. Mike Newell, Keith Graham, Brian French, my executive assistant from Chatham, Larry Landry, and the president of Union Gas, Steve Baker.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome students from Langstaff Secondary School in my riding of Richmond Hill sitting in the west gallery.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I know they're not in the chamber yet, but they will be here momentarily. I'm proud to welcome my aunt and uncle to Queen's Park today, Karl and Joey Nevin. Karl served formerly as a warden in Middlesex county.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I also would like to welcome Byron Behnke, who is the father of my legislative intern Jessica Behnke. I'm just delighted to welcome you into the chamber today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Mississauga—Erindale, for page Spencer Johnne, mother Marjo Johnne is here in the members' gallery today. We welcome you.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, as leaders, we're judged by the decisions that we make and the standards we set for those around us. As Premier, that sends a signal to job creators and investors about what it's like to do business in the province of Ontario. For those who are desperate to get a steady job, they look to the Premier for leadership. I've asked you

day in and day out; I've suggested extending the sitting for at least an additional week so we can come up with a jobs plan. You've decided not to do that. But I also want to talk about the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I will have order today.

Leader.

Mr. Tim Hudak: But this is more so on the standards that you set—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sudbury will come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That Auditor General's report last night should keep you awake at night—the grotesque waste in our hydro system. This is about your leadership and your standards. After that kind of abuse, no wonder hydro bills are going through the roof. I've just got to ask you, what's going to happen to your energy minister when you see this kind of debacle on his watch? How can you set that standard? Where is the bar? What's going to happen to Bob Chiarelli after this incredible mess at Ontario Power Generation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My desire for quiet is for all of the House. I would remind the Leader of the Opposition to use either titles or ridings, and that goes for anyone who decides to interject. I will be strong on that issue today.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to thank the Auditor General for her report. I think it's a very important part of our system, Mr. Speaker, that we have the oversight and that we have the analysis of government organization. The Auditor General has done a very good job, and the OPG and the government take very seriously the findings that she has outlined.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, when we learned of the auditor's findings, we expressed our concern to the OPG's board chair and CEO. We informed OPG that a plan of action had to be implemented to correct all the issues that have been identified in the report. It's clear that Ontarians should expect better and can expect better.

The board has terminated the employment of its chief financial officer; the executive vice-president, strategic initiatives; and vice-president, internal audit. OPG will reduce the eligible amount—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Very respectfully, hold on a second here. This report, you had in your possession for months; the energy minister has been there for 10. These jobs don't pop up like mushrooms in the dark. These are jaw-dropping figures: 8,000 people making \$100,000 a year or more on the hydro system; 60% of the workforce are in middle and upper management. It just makes no sense to those people who are struggling to pay their hydro bills to see this kind of scandalous mess.

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The only time you react is when you see there are issues of management. Once the horse is out of the barn, once the report comes out, you've got to respond to the newspapers, and you make something up.

Why wasn't something done sooner? Some 8,000 jobs don't pop up overnight. Was he asleep at the switch? This is the guy who famously said: "Don't worry about the gas plants. It's all just a cup of Tim Hortons coffee," in his own Marie Antoinette moment last week. Premier, the standards you set send a signal to investors and job creators about who's in charge here.

So let me ask you: Who is in charge, and what are you doing with your hydro minister for the incredible mess at Ontario Power Generation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have taken action, and I know that the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the specifics.

But let me be clear: There has not been a government in Ontario that has had the controls that I believe need to be in place to control overcompensation in this agency. There has not been a government that has put those controls in place—not the party opposite, not the third party. We are putting those controls in place. It is very important to me that Ontarians can expect better, and the culture that has developed over subsequent decades—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West will come to order and the Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order when she's answering.

Please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The challenges with energy sector compensation existed when the Leader of the Opposition's party was in government. He didn't change it. He was in cabinet. His leader didn't change it. I'm not making excuses for the behaviour. What I'm saying is: We are changing it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Honest to God, only the Liberals would give this kind of incredible waste a standing ovation.

You've been there for 10 years. Again, Premier, this is about the standard that you set for your leadership team. How can they get confidence in the province? Energy is one of the most crucial ministries when it comes to job creation. It's a scandalous mess, and it's costing us jobs like Kellogg's, like John Deere.

Your health minister, similarly, is failing a very crucial test. I just find it absolutely—I'm incredulous that

the health minister didn't know that Chris Mazza had a \$10-million salary coming his way. She said she left it sealed in the report. I actually find that hard to believe. I think it's probably easier to say that than to say that she didn't act. Either way, it's inexcusable.

Energy is critical to jobs and investment. Health is critical to our most vulnerable populations. If you see this happening—I know you're close; I know you're friends, but that's not what decisions should be about. It should be about competence: Who is doing the best at watching out for taxpayers in the province of Ontario. What are the standards you have for your ministers when you see this type of scandal, and you're looking the other way?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition would want to move off energy because he knows full well that government after government has not taken action in terms of making sure government has the mechanisms and the levers to pull to take control over those compensation packages. We are taking that action.

In terms of taking responsibility and taking action, every situation that the Leader of the Opposition has spoken to, we have dealt with. We have learned from those situations and we have put in place a new regime, whether it's in the specific situations in health care or whether it's in energy. But the Leader of the Opposition needs to accept that the culture that he is talking about in the energy organization is one that has been in place for decades.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The health minister this morning, when asked what the budget of Ornge was and whether she knew what the annual payments were for the \$275-million bond offering, responded by saying "Is this a quiz?" It's actually very serious business.

I want to know from the Premier, does she think it's acceptable for her health minister not to know what the annual budget of Ornge is and not to know about a \$20-million annual payment that Ornge now has to make on a \$275-million bond offering? Is that the kind of competency, transparency and oversight that she expects from her health minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has been a minister of the crown. He knows what's entailed in doing that job. He has not been the Minister of Health, which is a \$48-billion ministry, so he actually doesn't understand what it takes to transform a system like that. He actually doesn't understand what's necessary in terms of the ability to evaluate evidence and understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment will come to order. The member from Cambridge will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I think he does know is that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has a responsibility to make sure that we have a health care system that is sustainable over the long term. In order to do that, we have to make changes, and those are the kinds of changes that this Minister of Health is making so that the member opposite's children and grandchildren who live in Ontario will have a health care system when they need it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, I think the first change that should be made is a change of the Minister of Health because for the Minister of Health not to even know what the annual budget of Ornge is—this is an agency, an organization, that has been under the scope of the public accounts committee for two and a half years. One would expect that, at the very least, she would know what's going on in that agency, but she doesn't.

So I'm asking the Premier one more time to transform the health ministry of the province of Ontario. How can she count on a minister who doesn't know the fundamental issues relating to Ornge? How can she expect that minister to do her job when she demonstrates that kind of incompetence every day, every hour of the year? How can she possibly expect transformation to happen?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because the fundamental issue that this Minister of Health and Long-Term Care had to deal with was to make sure that the changes were in place so that there would be the appropriate oversight at Ornge. That's why we reintroduced Bill 11. That will mean that Ornge is more accountable, that there is a system in place that makes sure that the correct monitoring is there so that that situation won't arise again. That's the fundamental. That's the policy issue that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is responsible for, and that's the policy issue that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is dealing with. That's why she reintroduced Bill 11. The member opposite knows full well that it's support for that kind of oversight that he should be putting forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's interesting that that bill has not been called back for the Legislature to deal with. Why not? There has been lots of time. We haven't seen this bill in this House—if that bill is so important. Again, why isn't the Minister of Health doing her job? Why isn't that bill in the House for debate? Why hasn't that bill been passed if, in fact, it's going to make the difference?

I'm going to ask the Premier to refer this question to the Minister of Health. Can the Minister of Health tell us if, between the public accounts hearing this morning and now, she has found out what the budget of Ornge is for this fiscal year? Can the minister tell us?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care gave the number. She said \$152 million in committee. My understanding is, if you check Hansard, you will find the number there.

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The member opposite talks about bringing a particular bill forward. What he doesn't talk about are the procedural games that are being played in the Legislature. It's very difficult from the outside to look at what's happening within House leaders' meetings and across the floor, but the reality is that there is procedural wrangling going on. It's very unfortunate. We are working very hard to make the minority Parliament work. It would be fabulous to have two partners in that, in the opposition and the third party.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last March, the sunshine list showed hydro executives receiving massive compensation that broke the million-dollar mark by a mile. Did the Premier bother to even look at that sunshine list?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times in this House, we are introducing legislation, we are acting on our commitment to put controls in place on executive compensation, but we are going to do it in a way that recognizes the complexity of the various sectors, that recognizes that there need to be ranges in place, including hard caps, and recognizes that we have to look at the total compensation packages.

As I have said, subsequent governments have not put in place the mechanisms and levers to make sure that government has the control over those compensation packages. I'm not talking about a 10-year situation. I'm talking about decades, tens of years where those controls have not been in place. The parties opposite did not make those changes. We are, Mr. Speaker. We will put those controls in place.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will come to order. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, while most people were reacting with shock to those reports of sky-high salaries last March, the Premier mused about raising the reporting threshold, and there's not any evidence that she did much else. Did she call the head of the OPG or any hydro agency to ask on behalf of ratepayers what was going on with these sky-high salaries?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The very point I have been making is that government after government has not put the controls in place to be able to ask those questions

and get that information. I'm not excusing that, but I'm saying that there is a culture that developed that needs to be changed. Government after government did not make that change.

I've been in this office since February. We're going to make that change so government will be able to have direct control over those compensation packages.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: May I remind the Premier that for 10 years there has been a Liberal in the Premier's office and a Liberal at the Ministry of Energy.

The OPG has one shareholder; it's the province. The Premier's job is to be a voice for the people who are paying sky-high electricity bills. That's part of her job. People have watched the salaries and the perks grow for years. Is she telling the people paying the bills that she didn't place a single call to find out what the heck was going on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report was over a period of 10 years. It's important to note that in 2007, in response to the Agency Review Panel report, the ministry reduced OPG's executive salaries by 25% to 30% for new executive contracts. They couldn't change existing contracts.

In addition, the OPG executive compensation envelope has decreased by 9% since 2010 and is continuing to replace exiting executives at a lower cost. Base pay for OPG executives, including vice-presidents, has been frozen since 2010 and continues to be frozen. And through their business transformation plan, between 2011 and 2015 there will be a reduction of 2,300 full-time employees, with 1,500 FTEs already happening.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. OPG is owned by the people of Ontario. It's the job of the Premier to speak up on behalf of people paying the highest electricity bills in Canada. Instead, the Premier defended the same old policies. People have watched year after year as CEO salaries grew and grew. The Premier knew what was happening; she just chose to do absolutely nothing about it.

Is she ready to admit that, once again, the Liberals completely ignored their responsibility to the people who are stuck paying the bills in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The premise and the substance of the leader of the third party's question is just not accurate, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Energy has just outlined, there have been actions taken, but as I have said, I believe that there need to be more controls and there needs to be more authority on the part of government in order to take control of those compensation packages.

From my perspective, this is an issue that has developed over decades—not over the last 10 years, but over decades—and that means that there have been sub-

sequent governments that have not taken action. We have taken action; there have been changes made. But the fact is, there's more that needs to be done. That's why we're going to change it. That's why we're going to put controls in place so that government will have more direct control over those compensation packages, and I would expect that the leader of the third party would support that change, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While the Premier and her party were letting OPG executive pay skyrocket and helping executives buy million-dollar homes, people have been watching their bills go up to pay for the sky-high pay and perks.

Ron from the Niagara region writes this: "I live in an apartment which is heated with electric heat. My [old age security] and [Canada pension plan] have increased by less than 1%. [The government has] no concept of what their hydro increases do to the average senior.... The management system in hydro is so far away from the reality others live under...."

What does the Premier have to say to folks like Ron?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There is pressure on prices; however, when it comes to Ontario Power Generation, they have received no rate increase since 2008. In 2011, Mr. Speaker, they made an application for an increase of 6.4%. The Ontario Energy Board gave them a reduction of 0.8%.

Ontario Power Generation produces 40% of the power in Ontario, and their rate base is less than the other 60%. In addition, over the course of the last eight years, they have generated \$7 billion in net transfer dollars to the province of Ontario to help pay for schools, hospitals and colleges.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are paying the highest electricity bills in Canada, and instead of taking action, the Premier has turned a blind eye. People are tired of being stuck with sky-high bills because the Liberals simply can't be bothered to give a damn. New Democrats have been calling for a hard cap on CEO salaries for years. Is this Premier ready to admit that the Liberal government is responsible for driving up the hydro bills that people in this province are paying?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Is the leader of the third party prepared to accept the fact that she has no plan for hydro rates in the province of Ontario? She has no policy with respect to renewables. She's refusing to say yes to not going ahead with nuclear. And speaking of nuclear, Mr. Speaker, we have taken some very significant steps to moderate rate increases for the next 20 years. That includes deferring new nuclear, which—the Leader of the Opposition would invest \$15 billion on hydro that we don't need.

We have a 20-year plan. It projects an increase of 2.8% over that period. And for the short number of years leading into that 20 years, we have created mitigating

programs for energy consumers, including the 10% discount, including the energy tax credit, including the seniors' energy credit.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus today to ask a question of the Premier regarding OPG. Obviously, OPG has just made the Senate of Canada look like good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars.

Here we are today. I have so much material and questions that I don't know which to ask. The first question I might ask the Premier is: How could she let handsome pension plans like those that are occurring at OPG still continue? Another question I might ask the Premier today is: How could she only fire three executives when the rot and the corruption at OPG have gone so deep into that organization? I could also ask her how she could allow nepotism to occur to the level that it has at OPG, but, Speaker, I won't.

1100

The question I'm going to ask is on behalf of the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Areas. Nineteen business improvement areas in the city of Ottawa have asked the Premier this question: "We urge you to please work on the side of Ottawa retailers, on the side of job creators and on the side of Ottawa employees and reconsider your ... crippling hydro increases." Will you do it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he would freeze or lower rates, he said, "No, I cannot do that." That's for starters.

But let's talk about his policy with respect to Ontario Power Generation. His policy is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got them up here.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —he would privatize Ontario Power Generation, and the Toronto Sun said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order—last time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: "Hudak should keep in mind the last Tory government in Ontario that tried to do that with electricity generation, promising it would lead to lower hydro rates.

"Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage, and the Conservatives, faced with rising public fury, abandoned the scheme, leaving a financial disaster in their wake."

His policy is to privatize, to try to do what he did last time, and that's what his Toronto Sun says about his—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This minister has a lot of nerve, on a day after what was I think the most damning Auditor General's report since I have been in this chamber, three terms, to stand in his place and talk about a public policy initiative a decade ago, before his government was in office, before the taxpayers of this province were paying for their boondoggle—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The Minister of Energy will come to order. Thunder Bay–Atikokan, come to order.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Let's just stick with the facts, Premier, Minister, government over there. The people of this province are stuck with your energy policies. Last week, it was the long-term energy plan which is driving up rates. The week before that, it was the \$1.1-billion gas scandal. This week, it's the OPG—the new Senate of Canada—that is wasting taxpayer dollars and hurting the ratepayers of this province.

My question is, will he listen to the ratepayers in our city, the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Areas? Will you listen to them? Will you scrap your long-term energy plan? Will you put OPG in its place and fire more than three people?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, first of all, to correct the record, the policy that I referred to was not 10 years ago; it was his white paper that he issued about 12 months ago.

The Tories' failed attempt to privatize the electricity system in the late 1990s led to a sudden price shock; in only a few months, the price increased by 30%. And it gets worse: The Leader of the Opposition's proposal could mean that OPG would have to sell off the Niagara Falls generating station, one of Ontario's greatest assets.

The last time they tried to privatize, top advisers were at the trough. Well-connected Tory insiders received nearly \$6 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One. That's from the National Post.

Tom Long, this leader's co-campaign manager, made off with \$1.3 million in Hydro One contracts—from the Toronto Star, June 10, 2004.

Leslie Noble: The firm of Hudak's other co-campaign manager—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
New question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. In 2012, the government tried to kill the ONTC without any consultation, any planning or any policy. It claimed that it would save the taxpayers of Ontario \$265 million. What it didn't tell Ontarians was that in the same budget,

this government allocated \$325 million for divestment costs. Yesterday, the Auditor General's report outlined that if the divestment goes ahead, it will cost the taxpayers of Ontario over \$800 million.

Will your government once and for all admit that it was wrong and announce the halt of the divestment of the ONTC?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: My friend and colleague across the floor knows very well that the estimate of that large dollar figure is not an accurate reflection of our government's approach to transforming the ONTC. That is indeed an assessment of the potential associated liability. And may I say that the Auditor General says that herself. It assumes the worst—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The Auditor General said, "This estimate assumes the worst-case scenario for severance cost estimates and that no employees would be retained after divestment."

Mr. Speaker, that is not our government's approach. We are very clear about how important the ONTC is in terms of an economic development agency in north-eastern Ontario. That's why we are committed to a transformation of the ONTC.

Our minister's advisory committee has recognized that the status quo will not work. Everybody, I think, understands that the status quo will not work, and that's why we're committed to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: Let's talk about this government's approach to the ONTC. They announced the divestment, yet the Auditor General's report showed they didn't even bother to crunch the numbers for four months after.

Let's talk about this government's record on the ONTC. They're scrambling once again to come up with weasel words like "transformation," and you know who is left out in the cold? Northerners, seniors, the people who use the train, the customers, small business, big business.

The divestment is wrong. It could leave Ontarians with \$820 million in costs for a train that no longer stops anywhere. Is this government still planning on spending \$800 million to deny essential services to northern Ontario? Premier, is that your one Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are absolutely committed to seeing a sustainable, efficient, well-run Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. May I say, Mr. Speaker, the members of our ministerial advisory committee are in agreement with us on that.

I've got some extraordinarily important quotes. How about this from Mayor Al McDonald: "We all agree, including the union, the management, the stakeholders, the business model is broken and it needs to be restructured. The focus is on transformation, not divestment."

Back in May, at the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities' annual general meeting, I publicly said that divestment was no longer the only option on the table. That's why we're working so hard to see the ONTC transformed. It has got a bright future if we make the right decisions. There are some tough decisions. We'd love to have your help in that regard as well, like all other people in northern Ontario.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In the last three years, \$85 million in settlement funding to our province had been cut by the federal government. Settlement services play an important role in the lives of newcomers as they adjust to a new life in Ontario and start making valuable contributions to our society.

Federal cuts have changed the level of service that community agencies are able to provide for newcomers, and I have noticed the effects in my riding. York South-Weston is home to thousands of newcomers, and among them, many Somali Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you inform the House what kind of assistance your ministry is providing to help newcomers from the Somali community and the east African communities?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for her question.

Here in the province of Ontario, we believe in one Ontario. We believe that everyone in this province should have the opportunity to contribute, connect and achieve their goals. We also believe in investing in people through settlement services.

Midaynta Community Services and the Community Action Resource Centre are located in the member's riding and provide services to more than 1,000 people of Somali background.

Midaynta is one of the eight settlement agencies in Ontario that are now receiving a grant to look at new and innovative ways to deliver settlement services to vulnerable immigrant populations and underserved communities. This organization's work focuses on the integration of Somali newcomers and youth.

This year, our government will invest \$7.6 million into newcomer settlement services.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Speaker, for that response, and thank you to the minister. The settlement services that are provided to newcomers are life-changing.

While many new Canadians continue to choose Toronto as a destination, others are choosing to settle in smaller communities across the province, communities like Essex county, Sarnia or the Niagara region. Newcomers who settle outside Toronto need access to the same services and programs provided in larger cities in order to participate fully in the economic, social and

cultural life of our province. They need places that will provide them with services like language training and employment counselling.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what newcomer settlement programs are available to newcomers across Ontario, more specifically to those who settle in smaller communities?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member again for her question. This year, our government will fund 98 community organizations across this great province to help 80,000 newcomers here in our province. Province-wide, 89% of clients surveyed last year reported that they can make more informed decisions about their new life in Ontario after receiving such services.

I'd like to highlight one of the organizations that provides newcomer services here in our province, and that's the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre. Since 2009, we have provided over half a million dollars to this organization so that they can deliver newcomer orientation sessions. These important services are used by a broad range of clients, including permanent residents, refugee claimants and provincial nominees.

This government believes in helping newcomer settlement services in becoming a functioning part of what we do here in this province, because we know that, at the end of the day, when newcomers succeed Ontario succeeds.

SERVICEONTARIO

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. As you know, this is my first term in the House, but I can tell you that a lot of people have asked me how things are going and what I think of the management of the government.

Well, I can tell you that I'm taken aback. It's absolutely deplorable, the things that have happened in this term of this Legislature. I used to tell them at council that they could take a barrel of money and go down Bay Street and throw it in the lake, because that's what they were doing; here, you'd need a huge dump truck. You seem to have no idea of tax dollars and the value of them whatsoever.

Mr. Minister, ServiceOntario pays their employees an average of \$145,000 a year, and they take off 25 days, on average, sick. What this means is that, when you combine vacation days and statutory holidays—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. How about quiet? I remind all members, when I stand, you sit. Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: We appreciated the Auditor General's report. I had a chance to meet with the Auditor General, where she congratulated me on the good work that ServiceOntario has been doing. The Auditor General's report noted a number of areas for improvement; that's why we have the auditor. We accept those, and we're moving forward.

The fact of the matter is that ServiceOntario is a service, as it would suggest, which is across this province and which has been working over the past number of

years to bring more private sector involvement and at the same time to make sure that it offers efficient services to the people of Ontario.

I am pleased with the progress that we have been making. As I say, when I take a look at the Auditor General's report, she makes a number of suggestions that we will certainly be following up on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: ServiceOntario operates some of its facilities with private operators and some of it is operated by the government, but according to the auditor's report, the costs of the government operations are almost three times what the private operator pays.

Now, this again is another huge waste of money. You've got to remember the fact that we have a deficit of \$12 billion. We've got a debt of \$273 million. If we're ever going to get that reduced or eliminated, we've got to deal with things like this. We can't have this kind of over-expenditure and waste of money. It has gone on far too long, and I want to know when the government is going to put a stop to it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we're very happy to follow up on what the Auditor General said.

But the honourable member knows that there is a system of private sector offices which handle high volumes, high transactions. Yes, we have some that are run by the government, which are in small communities and offer a wide range of services, not all of them as popular and used as often, which causes higher costs.

Perhaps he wants to talk to some of his colleagues, because I sign letters all the time from his colleagues complaining about the fact that they don't have enough ServiceOntario in small, rural communities.

We are trying to find a balance here between making sure that the people of Ontario can access these services in their communities as well as finding efficiencies through an involvement with the private sector. Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member should get his facts straight.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In 2010, the government slashed statutory accident benefits—those are the benefits that accident victims receive—by 50% across Ontario and 70% in the GTA.

Now, in her report yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed that province-wide benefits were slashed by more than 50% in 2010 but added a new number. During the exact same time period, when our benefits were slashed by more than 50%, our premiums went up by 8%. Our premiums went up by 8%.

How does this government explain to the seven million drivers in Ontario why 8% more has been taken out of their pockets at the same time that their benefits were

slashed by 50%, all with the permission of this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite knows fully well that the cost of our premiums is something that our government has been addressing since 2003. We have taken measures, and a number of our members have been advocating and leading the charge, to find ways to reduce auto insurance premiums. It is why our government quickly took on the auto task force to clamp down on fraud.

One of the initiatives that the member is talking about is the increasing cost of claims. That has to be addressed, and that's why we've brought forward legislation, in co-operation with the member opposite, to ensure that we get those costs down and get those premiums down as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The reality is that in 2010, \$2 billion has been saved by the insurance industry: \$2 billion of savings, of which the people of Ontario have not even seen a penny of savings in terms of their premiums.

The Auditor General made it very, very clear that there has been an 8% increase in premiums at the same time that costs went down by 50% when it comes to the benefits that we receive.

Drivers are getting frustrated with broken promises. When will this government actually do something to bring down premiums, to give some relief to the seven million drivers in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Ontario has some of the most comprehensive benefits anywhere in Canada. We have been taking extraordinary measures to support and help our drivers and those that are affected during these accidents.

But more importantly, it has also been very clear that these rising costs have affected our premiums. It's why they are too high, and it's why we've taken the necessary steps to clamp down and get them reduced, and they have started to reduce. We have competitors right throughout the system that are now advertising lower rates.

The strategy is working. We are bringing down those rates, and we're doing everything that we can to protect those drivers, and at times we do so without support from the opposition, and that is shameful.

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SENIORS

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. There's a very important statistic I'd like to share: In Peel, in the year 2017, there will be more people over the age of 65 than children under the age of 14. Think about that: more people over the age of 65 than children under the age of 14, in three years. So I really laud and applaud the minister responsible for seniors for showing such leadership on this file.

As the constituents in my riding age, the fact is that many of them do approach me and ask me for advice on

the various options when it comes to the issue of long-term care versus retirement facilities. They're looking for some valuable information that will help them make that decision.

Speaker, through you to the minister, my question is, what kind of information is out there that could help my constituents make this decision?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm very grateful to the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for this wonderful question. I believe that she's not the only one with seniors looking for proper accommodation. I think every member has that particular problem.

In Ontario, we have some 700 retirement homes with some 55,000 residents, and every home offers different levels of care. They have the option and the choice of where and how to live. Also, through the Ontario Retirement Homes Act regulatory authority, we provide all kinds of information to anyone—seniors or family members—who wishes to look into aspects of a particular retirement home. We provide information on the web, through the Seniors' INFOline. We have the seniors' guide as well, and we provide that information on several levels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I thank the minister for that answer. Once families have made that decision, what they are really looking for is peace of mind that their loved ones are safe. I'm wondering if the minister could respond and just tell me and my constituents what we are doing to make sure—what kind of oversight is there, especially when it comes to licensing? Who is issuing these licences, and what action is taken if trouble is noticed?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again, I have to thank the member for a good question. I think this is a concern that every member of the House has when they have to look at a particular home and how they view and assess the particular house and where to put their loved one. It is the information that we provide and it is also the safety that we provide for the seniors when they look for a particular home. Through the Retirement Homes Act and the regulatory authority, we provide all the necessary information so seniors and families can make a choice: what they want to do, where they want to live and how they want to live.

Also, let me say that every resident is notified when a house may be in difficulty. We don't rest on our laurels, if you will, but we take immediate action. We notify the local authorities, the CCACs, the LHINs—the local health networks—the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Housing and make sure that the housing fits the needs of the particular seniors.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Premier, yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed what we've told you from day one: There would be no

savings from your fire sale of Ontario Northland. In fact, as you now know, instead of saving \$265 million—the auditor dropped a bombshell—it will cost you \$820 million. That's a difference of a billion dollars.

When we first disclosed that you knew this last summer, you changed your tune. You then said, "Divestment isn't the only answer." But it was only after you saw the draft of the auditor's report two weeks ago that you came up with a new phrase: "transformation." Premier, why is it that you only change your direction on Ontario Northland after you get caught?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Is it parliamentary to say that's malarkey? The member knows very well that last May at FNOM's AGM, after a couple of months working with the Premier on this plan, we made a determination that divestment was not the only option, so we moved into the transformation phase of our approach at ONTC.

We're determined to find a sustainable, long-term future. We're absolutely committed to making that happen. The fact is, the member also knows very clearly that the figures that are cited are actual total potential associated liabilities; again, an approach that does not reflect the direction that we're going in. We are going to come up with some very good decisions, we believe.

The ministerial advisory committee—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —work together. Mayor Al McDonald is on that, president Alan Spacek, industry leaders, First Nations and Métis nation leaders. We are determined to see a long-term, sustainable future for the ONTC, and we're doing some great work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I think what "malarkey" is is trying to weasel out of \$820 million.

Let's look at the facts. The freedom of information showed us your goal was to divest Ontario Northland and, if that failed, liquidate pennies on the dollars. Through the gas plant scandal documents, we learned there would be no savings. Instead, there would be a billion-dollar hole in your budget, and it was only then that you began trotting out these weasel words.

But the auditor told us—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw. "Wiggle words" is what I meant to say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's just continue with no other editorial, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: For 18 months, Speaker, this government has continued to leave, as the auditor said, uncertainty in the marketplace. You left 1,000 families in the north unable to make key purchases or life decisions.

Premier, how can you be so heartless to northerners? Will you do as we've asked in letter after letter to you and stop the divestment today?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: You know, Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Nipissing just might want to get off his high horse. The fact is, northerners have not forgotten that it was his party, when they were in government, that tried to sell off the ONTC. The member for Nipissing himself has said some pretty amazing things publicly. How about this, what he said to the ONTC workers who were gathered outside his office: "I'm going to be straight with you. I've always been straight with you," said the member from Nipissing. "I can't tell you what you want to hear. I can't say I'm opposed to privatization"—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —these guys are unbelievable.

We are determined to move forward for a sustainable, long-term Ontario Northland Transportation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, yesterday members of this House learned that more than 500 workers at the London Kellogg's plant are losing their jobs. As the Premier knows, these are good-paying jobs, family-supporting jobs, the kinds of jobs that generate tax revenues and that pay for the kids, the mortgage, the car and all the other expenses of daily life.

Workers at Kellogg's are devastated by this news and understandably angry when they see their plant shutting down. What they want to know, what my community wants to know, is, did this government take any action at all to prevent the closure of the Kellogg's plant and protect good jobs in London?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions being asked and I understand the anger and frustration of the employees in the community in London over this decision, a very regrettable business decision. Of course, almost the worst part, I think, is the timing of it, so close before the holiday season.

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Our number one concern, as a government, and mine as the minister responsible, is for the employees that unfortunately received this very bad news about the upcoming closure over the course of the next year. In fact, we've reached out to the community. I spoke with the mayor of London actually just several minutes ago prior to question period to offer my support, so that we can make sure we're providing every support. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as well is providing, through their usual supports, all facilities; all supports available to support the employees, their families and the communities at this very difficult time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Premier: Too many companies are shutting down in southwestern Ontario. In the last several weeks, we have lost more than 1,000 manufacturing jobs under this government's watch. The Premier said she expected these closures. She said it would be unrealistic not to have these closures and some negative impact. Now, in London, more than 500 families will be losing their jobs. This will have a devastating impact on our local economy and in our community.

What is the Premier's plan to stop the jobs from bleeding away from southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the job numbers recently came out and they demonstrated that, last month, we created more than 12,000 jobs in manufacturing alone, many of those in southwestern Ontario.

I want to also reiterate that there are important investments that are happening in the London area, and I want to indicate that the unemployment rate in London fortunately—where we saw it back in March, the unemployment rate was more than 9%—it has come down in the last month to 7.5%, and that's a very important development. In fact, over the last year in London, 3,000 new manufacturing jobs, according to Statistics Canada, have been created in the London area alone, so we are making progress.

It is a very difficult time, and I don't want to underestimate the particular importance and very great disappointment I have in this government personally for the developments at Kellogg's. It's never good news for anybody or their families or communities important to London. I'm certainly going to work hard in the months ahead to see what we can do further.

TRAIL SYSTEM

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. In October the minister, the Premier and myself announced in my riding of Ajax-Pickering a \$3.5-million fund for the expansion of our province's world-class trail systems as part of the Pan Am Games legacy fund. Several organizations, such as Trans Canada Trail, share the road coalition and the Ontario Trails Council praised our government's commitment and support for Ontario trails.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please explain why this Pan Am Games legacy funding is so important, not only to the people of my riding of Ajax-Pickering but to all of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for asking the question. Linking the Pan/Parapan American Games to expand our world-class trail system is, in my opinion, a smart thing to do. This will help complete 250 kilometres in gaps in Ontario's Trans Canada Trail. It will connect communities from Ottawa to Windsor, from Fort Erie to Huntsville, creating a continuous trail for more than 2,000 kilometres.

Speaker, investing in infrastructure for the 2015 Pan American Games is part of the Ontario government's

three-part plan to grow our economy: invest in people, invest in infrastructure and create a welcoming business environment. Investment related to the games will create 26,000 jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you for that response, Minister. With the Ajax Sportsplex ballpark also being built in my riding, the Pan/Parapan American Games is certainly bringing in many benefits and opportunities to Durham region and the entire province.

I know that the people I represent, and those across Ontario, will utilize these trails for years to come. The extensions will ensure our communities of Ajax and Pickering are connected like never before. They will get to enjoy year-round hiking trails, trout fishing and picnic and recreation opportunities. However, this cannot be the only opportunity our government has taken to support Ontario's trail systems, is it?

Mr. Speaker, through you again to the minister: Can he please tell us what else our government has been doing to support our province's trails?

Hon. Michael Chan: In 2005, we launched the Ontario Trails Strategy. It guides the development, management, promotion and use of trails in Ontario.

Since 2005, we have established the Ontario Trails Coordinating Committee to oversee implementation of the strategy and mapped 2,466 trailheads, representing over 38,000 kilometres of trails and 10,000 trail segments across the province. We also funded a variety of local and regional trail projects, improved accessibility for people with disabilities and developed an award-winning central website for trails.

Since 2009, the province has invested more than \$77 million to support Ontario's trails, and we are seeing tremendous results.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Minister of Education. An audit at the Toronto District School Board released yesterday was a crystal-clear demonstration that your so-called wage freeze isn't a wage freeze at all. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has stood in this Legislature day in and day out and asked for an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. The idea was dismissed because your government was adamant that it already had one.

When board members, without approval, decide to give themselves a salary increase, that's not a wage freeze. In fact, TDSB officials told auditors that other school boards have also ignored the order to freeze pay. This is the problem, Minister: When your wage freeze isn't a real wage freeze, no one takes you seriously, and everyone feels entitled to grab whatever they want.

But it's not too late. Will you adopt the Ontario PC plan to adopt an across-the-board public sector wage freeze to rein in spending and stop the foolishness at the TDSB?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Obviously, the report from Ernst and Young which was released yesterday did raise a

number of areas of concern. I think it's important to recognize that the new director and the audit committee from TDSB are the people who asked for the forensic audit and that they have responded that they will in fact work with us to make sure that all of the recommendations are addressed.

But what I must point out, in this particular case, is that my ministry officials did tell any school board that checked in with the ministry, and made it very clear, that the broader public sector compensation act did apply to the senior administration. So it was very clear to everybody involved that the act applied.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Minister, it's clear you buried the report on the same day as the Auditor General's report in an attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the media and Ontario taxpayers. On its own, the rules-don't-apply-to-me attitude at the TDSB is bad enough, but this is a culture of entitlement, and you have refused to do anything about it. This is the same TDSB where workers billed \$143 to screw in a pencil sharpener, where workers billed \$266 for seven hours of work to hang three pictures on a wall. It's no wonder that the audit found that 75% of the transactions in the director's office did not use a competitive bidding process.

Monitoring the situation is no longer enough, Minister. Ontarians expect action. Will you show some leadership and make these board members pay back the salary increases they should never had had in the first place? Will taxpayers get their Christmas refund, Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Could we just please sort out here what we're talking about? We are not talking about board members whose salaries are not in compliance. We are talking about the members of the senior executive whose salaries are not in compliance. Now, that is very, very serious, Speaker, and I will demand—have demanded—that the board come into compliance with the broader public sector compensation act. They will come into full compliance, as will any other board.

In fact, we do a number of spot audits on school boards throughout the province every year, and I have asked my officials to add an audit of senior executive compensation to the boards that they are doing a spot audit on currently.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday's Auditor General's report provided us with the facts and figures to back up what families have been telling us for some time, that lengthy delays for diagnosis and treatment for children with autism mean that young people are not being given their best chance to succeed. Even when they get off the multi-year wait-lists, access to service remains uneven and arbitrary. Families have long been telling this government that the system of supports for children with autism is failing.

Today, there are more children waiting for services than those who are receiving them, and we know that children who would often benefit the most from a particular therapy are simply not eligible.

To make matters worse, the auditor tells us that this government has failed to collect information, assess program effectiveness and measure for the outcomes. Speaker, at what point is the government going to take—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for the question. I'd like to thank the Auditor General for her report and the discussions that we've had with respect to the recommendations. We welcome her input in terms of how we can further improve our services, but let me remind this House what this government and this party has done with respect to autism. We have quadrupled the funding that's available for autism services. We eliminated the age six cut-off for services, ensuring that services are available for children up to the age of 18, not only up to the age of six, which is where it was at prior to us taking it to government.

We will continue to increase our investments. We invested an additional \$5 million. As well, we have a clinical expert committee that is going to be bringing forward recommendations with respect to changes that we need to make with respect to autism. We will continue to work with our communities.

VISITOR

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome Katie Stewart here, from my constituency office in London.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore on a point of order.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: I'd just like to correct the record. Apparently, I said that the debt was \$273 million. Of course, it's \$273 billion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion in order to extend the sitting of the House to Monday, December 16.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome some of the students from Dr. Norman Bethune, who are visiting us today: Marco Wong, Kevin Vuong, Cherie Wai and Sharon Xu, and the principal, Sandy Kaskens, who are visiting us in the chamber. Thank you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am very pleased to welcome for his first time to this House my best friend and husband, Dennis Schiestel. Here he comes. The door just opened. There he is.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a page.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure for me to introduce a number of friends from the city of Ottawa. I'd first like to start with my good friend—long-time friend—Roxane Villeneuve Robertson, as well as her husband, Jamie, attending the assembly today, and also my good friends Peter Hominic and Dennis Vaillencourt. They are here from eastern Ontario as well. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce my wife, Jane, but she's not here. She's with Dennis.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: And they're back here somewhere, Speaker. Oh, there they are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, that's a controversy in the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHRISTMAS PARADES

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I'll bring some of the festive spirit back to the Legislature, perhaps, and sanity. I'd like to take a moment to highlight some of the Christmas festivities in my home riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. In fact, Speaker, each year the towns of Baden, Elmira, New Hamburg, Wellesley, St. Agatha, St. Jacobs and St. Clements bring residents together to celebrate the season with the long-standing tradition of our region's local Christmas parades.

Over the past two weekends, I've had the good fortune to attend the parades in New Hamburg, Elmira and Baden. I'm also looking forward to attending Wellesley's on Friday night, St. Agatha's on Saturday afternoon, along with St. Clements' parade next Saturday.

I'd like to say, at this special time of the year, there's nothing quite like spending Christmas in a small town. All along the parade route, the children are out with their parents enjoying the festivities. It is really the spirit of an old-fashioned Christmas, where everyone comes out and enjoys the sights of the season.

It's been my pleasure and privilege to represent the good people of Kitchener-Conestoga over the last two years. As I've had the opportunity to attend all of the Christmas parades in my riding and the many more to

come, it's quite amazing to see the kids that are out looking for that little bit of candy and seeing the parades as they go by, whether it be the fire trucks and the good folks that volunteer in our local fire departments, or Tex, the Kitchener Ranger, coming out to say hi to the kids. I know they truly enjoy that time, whether it's a daytime parade or a nighttime parade.

Mr. Speaker, again, the spirit of Christmas is alive and well in Kitchener-Conestoga, and I'd like to wish everyone at home in my riding and here, of course, a very merry Christmas.

SUNFEST

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to recognize Alfredo Caxaj, a constituent in London West who was recently named one of the 10 most influential Hispanic Canadians by the Canadian Hispanic Business Alliance.

Alfredo, a musician who arrived in London from Guatemala in 1985, is well known in our community as the founder and artistic director of Sunfest, the second-largest music festival in Canada and a showcase of the world's best musicians. Each July, Sunfest draws more than 225,000 visitors to London and injects millions into the local economy.

Launched in 1995, the festival has grown over the last two decades into one of London's largest attractions. It has become deeply embedded in London's cultural and civic identity and enjoys ongoing support from a range of corporate and government sponsors.

But as Alfredo is quick to point out, Sunfest's real legacy is its social impact. The festival is offered free of charge, exposing visitors to Canadian musicians and performers from around the world and enriching the lives of those who might not otherwise be able to afford music and cultural events. It has even incubated future artists whose first experience with world music was at Sunfest.

Through his leadership, Alfredo Caxaj has not only put London on the map, but has also demonstrated the power of arts and culture as a vibrant tool for local economic development.

INSTALLATIONS SCOLAIRES

SCHOOL FACILITIES

M. Bas Balkissoon: C'est avec plaisir que je vous annonce l'ouverture de l'école Laure-Rièse dans ma circonscription de Scarborough-Rouge River.

Now that the doors of this new school are open, the needs of Scarborough students to learn in French will be expanded. The school will have 260 students from kindergarten to grade 6.

Speaker, I also recently attended the opening of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati Catholic School in the Morningside Heights community. This is a new state-of-the-art facility that will give Catholic students in the community an opportunity to learn much closer to home.

It is vital that we provide opportunities for all students, and in my riding of Scarborough-Rouge River, I'm

pleased that new facilities like this have been built to ensure students can live, play and learn in their home community.

The opening of these facilities not only demonstrates that more people are choosing Scarborough–Rouge River to live in, but represents the community's diversity. In each of the schools mentioned, you will see students from every race and cultural background together sharing the opportunities that our province offers.

I'm happy and proud of the construction of these new facilities but also of the fact that they represent the future of Ontario.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: The case for building the Highway 6 Morriston bypass has been strengthened by a new economic study initiated by Mayor Dennis Lever and the council of the township of Puslinch. The study was led by Dr. Clarence Woudsma of the University of Waterloo, and it confirms what we in Wellington–Halton Hills have been saying for years: The traffic bottleneck at Morriston, on Highway 6 south of the 401, is not just a local issue, but affects a whole region of the province and the economy.

The current traffic logjams through Morriston are costing commuters tens of millions of dollars every year, and the commercial traffic costs are in the millions annually, Dr. Woudsma's study indicates. He also confirms this corridor is a key link in our trade with the United States. It's an essential link between a large portion of the Lake Huron and Bruce region and the Hamilton–Niagara region and the eastern seaboard of the United States.

When we met with the former Minister of Transportation in May of last year, he inquired about the views of the local business community. This study answers that question directly, and I quote from the study: "There is unanimity from the business community that the construction of the bypass would reduce their costs significantly."

We are united in our call to get the Highway 6 Morriston bypass on the Ministry of Transportation's southern highways program, their five-year plan for new highway construction, consistent with my private member's resolution, the very first one listed on the Legislature's order paper. I urge the Minister of Transportation to agree to meet with township officials and industry leaders in the new year to discuss the report and how we can work together to get the Morriston bypass on the five-year plan.

NANCY MUTCH

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand today in sadness and in joy to talk about the passing of my friend Nancy Mutch. She died yesterday after a very brief illness. She was a resident of the Beach. She was a charming and funny woman. She was a volunteer for all good causes. She worked in Jack Layton's office as a volunteer, in my colleague Peter Tabuns's office as a volunteer, and occa-

sionally with me. She was a member of the cancer society, and she was constantly in and around this very building, along with her husband, Paul. She had amazing humour.

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She was in the community at the Easter parades, the Christmas parades; everywhere she went, she literally lit up the place.

When she died, her husband Paul sent the following, and I think it's absolutely fitting to read this. He wrote: "As for tributes, if you wish to do something, instead of flowers or donations, do something nice for someone with no expectation of return. It's how Nancy lived her life—there could be no more fitting tribute.

"If you'd like an example of her generosity, consider this—she gave her wedding dress to a drag queen because, in her words, 'he looked better in it than me.'"

She asked that there be no funeral, just to remember her and do something unselfish. She leaves behind her husband, Paul, and her dog named Boo. In the phrase of the old song—and she loved rock 'n' roll and all music forms—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sing it, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no.

Paul and Boo back on the road again.

SANTA'S PARADE OF LIGHTS

Mr. Phil McNeely: Each year, families in my community of Orléans are treated to the annual Santa's Parade of Lights. Anyone is allowed to participate so long as they meet the one requirement: have a well-lighted float.

I'm pleased to stand today and recognize the efforts of the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association for organizing the 2013 Ottawa–Orléans parade. I also want to thank the 82 participants for their hard work and charitable spirit for participating in this year's parade. All proceeds from the parade go to help the Salvation Army's Toy Mountain, a toy drive to help less fortunate children in Ottawa have the sort of Christmas morning that many of us take for granted.

The parade's route goes along St-Joseph Boulevard, the heart of the Orléans community, and is the best-attended Christmas parade in Ottawa, drawing out thousands of families throughout the city. Over 100,000 people attended this year's parade.

Since becoming an MPP in 2003, I've participated every year with a horse-drawn carriage, but this year was special for me, as I was joined by my son, James, his wife, Erika, my grandsons Keegan and Logan, and my granddaughter Macey, who enjoyed her first Christmas parade behind the two big Clydesdales, Sparky and Wilson.

I also want to thank those who helped prepare my float and distributed candy during the event: Nathalie Monpetit, Anick Tremblay, Shawn Kalbhenn, Frédérique and Charlotte Hébert, Karyne Jolicoeur, and Andy Singh. And a special thanks to Navandale Farms and the McWilliams family for providing the horses and carriage every year.

Again, congratulations to all those organizers and supporters for making this tradition bigger and brighter every year.

IDIOPATHIC PULMONARY FIBROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to bring attention to the fact that we, in Ontario, are failing idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis patients in Ontario today. Last week, I asked the deputy minister to review the funding process and begin funding Esbriet for those who desperately need it to save their lives. There are thousands of Ontarians suffering from IPF whose lives can be improved and prolonged today. This is not a political issue. It's really about access to health care in Ontario today.

Bryon Miles of Northumberland, Barbara Skinner from Wellington-Halton Hills, Virginia Koury from my riding of Durham, and Hugh Detzler from Bruce-Huron, all deserve access. They are but a few Ontarians who can be helped immediately with approved funding for Esbriet.

Earlier today, my colleague PC MPP Ted Arnott wrote to the Minister of Health to express the benefits that his constituent Barb Skinner received by taking Esbriet. Without Esbriet, Ms. Skinner believes she might not have lived long enough to receive a double lung transplant.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that many Ontarians cannot afford Esbriet. The treatment cost is \$3,800 every 28 days, or \$50,000 per year, for every IPF patient. And that countless patients die while waiting for organ transplants.

The government must take the responsible course of action and admit that the EAP process is broken and begin funding Esbriet for IPF patients across Ontario. This is the right thing to do and it's the right season to do it. Do the right thing and fund Esbriet.

DANFORTH GARDENS PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise in the House today to address a number of concerns some of my constituents have brought regarding Danforth Gardens Public School in Scarborough Southwest.

I'm proud the Minister of Education has made it a real priority to make Ontario's school system, especially at the primary level, a key priority. Since 2003, we've increased funding for the Toronto District School Board by over 30%, to a total of over \$2 billion, even while enrollment has declined by 13%. Mr. Speaker, more needs to be done.

Madrimooto Subramani and Mr. Shahid Mian, two active constituents, have informed me that a number of facilities at Danforth Gardens Public School are in serious need of attention. Both the lunchroom and the gymnasium have failed to accommodate the ever-growing population of the school. Parents have noted that the size and age of the school's gymnasium fails to provide optimal space for the students' physical education classes.

I was disappointed to learn that the Toronto District School Board did not include Danforth Gardens in their capital priorities; that was their submission to the min-

istry for consideration for funding. I will continue to work with the TDSB on behalf of my constituents to ensure that Danforth Gardens becomes a priority for the board.

Mr. Subramani and Mr. Mian have managed to compile over 700 signatures of concerned residents and parents in the neighbourhood who wish to see more funds available for the school's renovation.

I take great pride in how far we've come in providing extra education services in Ontario, but more needs to be done, and this is a key issue in my riding.

OUTSTANDING CITIZEN AWARDS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm proud today to stand up in this House and acknowledge 11 Huron-Bruce citizens who have been nominated for Outstanding Citizen awards. These awards celebrate people who have distinguished themselves as community leaders and who have made valuable contributions throughout the riding. These citizens were recognized this past Friday, December 6, at a special concert in Teeswater at the town hall.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend sincere appreciation to the individuals who took the time to nominate people who have made a difference in their local communities. This is a way to celebrate volunteers and hard-working community members. Our community is such a wonderful place to live and work, and these exceptional citizens were all present for this special evening.

I'd like to congratulate them: Rick McMurray from Lucknow, Jo-Ann McDonald from Brussels, Jim and Fran Farrell from Ripley, Vicki Carter from Bluevale, Quincy Bridge from Auburn, Ed Payette from Goderich, Hugh Mason from Huron Township, Doreen McGlynn from Teeswater, Tim Mancell from Walkerton and Laurie Dykstra from Exeter.

In recognition of their outstanding community involvement, I will be making a donation to Wes for Youth, an online support network for young people.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all these citizens. It was somewhat serendipitous in the sense that, that afternoon, a wonderful gentleman by the name of Wally Ballagh had passed. He was an amazing champion for the town hall in Teeswater, and we dedicated all the awards that evening to his memory.

ANNUAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid today upon the table the 2012-13 annual report from the Ombudsman of Ontario for the open meeting law enforcement team.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne les enfants de 16 ans et plus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne le commissaire aux services en français.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to finish the report, please.

Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have three points of order at the same time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All things being equal, in terms of who caught my eye after the report was submitted, it would be the minister.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

TRAVAUX DE LA CHAMBRE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting Bill 106, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner.

M. Gilles Bisson: Point d'ordre là-dessus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order?

M. Gilles Bisson: Oui.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will acknowledge the member from Timmins–James Bay on the same point of order.

M. Gilles Bisson: Je pense que puisque c'est pour le commissaire des affaires francophones, j'aimerais qu'on prenne cette motion et qu'on se prononce en français aussi.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate the member's request, and I will defer to the minister to decide whether or not that's appropriate, because it's her decision on the point of order.

I would now clarify: The minister is seeking unanimous consent. Do we agree? Okay.

Minister.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je propose la troisième lecture du projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne le commissaire aux services en français, et que ce projet de loi soit accepté immédiatement en troisième lecture, sans débat et sans amendement. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The unanimous consent is to put it here. So do we agree with that? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will now move her motion for third reading.

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT (FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS (COMMISSAIRE AUX SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS)

M^{me} Meilleur moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner / Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne le commissaire aux services en français.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the minister.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je m'en voudrais de ne pas souligner la contribution exceptionnelle de mon adjoint parlementaire pour m'avoir aidé à faire adopter ce projet de loi. Mon adjoint parlementaire, Grant Crack.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay on the same point of order.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais souligner la contribution de M^{me} France Gélinas, qui a introduit ce projet de loi à beaucoup de reprises à cette Assemblée, et finalement

que le gouvernement a cédé à cette motion. On est très fiers, comme néo-démocrates, que c'est arrivé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North on the same point of order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will do this in English.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: As Chairman of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, on Bill 106, I want to thank the minister and I want to thank our critic. I want to thank all members of the committee who sat in and who supported this bill, and all the people who made deputations—not only the four people here today, but in fact for 400 or 500 groups across the province of Ontario. Thank you very much for the support as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try for the third time to get the government's Bill 105 passed.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Oh, sorry. The fourth time. We did one last week too. You're going to like this one.

I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act; Bill 58, An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day; and Bill 56, An Act to prohibit certain restrictions on the use of aggregates in performing public sector construction work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice on Bills 105, 58, and 56.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice on Bill 105.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 151, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. John Milloy: During ministers' statements, please, Mr. Speaker.

FUNCTIONING MUNICIPAL COUNCILS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE FONCTIONNEMENT EFFICACE DES CONSEILS MUNICIPAUX

Mr. McDonell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

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Mr. Jim McDonell: The bill amends the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, to change the date on which the term of the offices governed by the act begins from December 1 to the second Monday in November in the year of a regular election. The time frame within which recounts of votes must be completed would also be reduced.

The act is also amended to change the penalties for candidates who incur election campaign expenses exceeding the permitted amount, who fail to file the required documents regarding campaign finances or who fail to pay amounts required in relation to campaign surpluses. If a candidate incurs expenses exceeding the permitted amount, the candidates forfeits any office to which he or she is elected and is ineligible to be elected or appointed to office until after the next election. For the other defaults respecting campaign finances, the candidate is given 60 days to comply with the filing or payment requirement. Failure to comply results in forfeiture of the office and ineligibility to be elected or appointed to office until after the next election.

COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE OBLIGATIONS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 DE CONFORMITÉ AUX OBLIGATIONS COMMERCIALES INTERNATIONALES

Mr. Chiarelli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision / Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité en ce qui concerne une décision de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'll make my comments during ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader seeks to put a motion without notice. All agreed? I heard a no.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to present a motion without notice on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Do we agree? I heard a no.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice on the Select Committee on Developmental Services. Do we agree? We agree.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Select Committee on Developmental Services be authorized to meet for up to eight days during the winter adjournment, such days and locations to be determined by the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that the Select Committee on Developmental Services be authorized to meet for up to eight days during the winter adjournment, such days and locations to be determined by the committee. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 o'clock midnight tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 midnight tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1535 to 1540.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members take their seats, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can I get some quiet?

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 37. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crack, Grant
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Orazietti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Holyday, Douglas C.

Horwath, Andrea
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 40; the nays are 51.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Same vote?

I heard a no.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1545 to 1550.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwintar, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Holyday, Douglas C.

Horwath, Andrea
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

care, post-secondary education, justice and transportation. To meet the needs of Ontarians, these public services require a solid foundation, and that foundation is put in place right here in this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I would ask members to shuffle themselves quickly.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like some help from the members. Thank you.

Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I often have that effect on this place.

I'm very pleased to stand today to introduce the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. We've heard from Ontarians about the need for updates and changes, and we're taking action through this new act to strengthen the bricks and mortar of existing legislation, legislation that governs a variety of sectors in this province. These amendments will improve efficiency and responsiveness for Ontarians, and that's a priority for our government and for this assembly.

There are five components to the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. First, the act proposes to amend the Courts of Justice Act to help spouses who were married in Ontario but reside outside of Canada to get a divorce in the province if they are not able to get a divorce in their home jurisdiction. These changes would allow Ontario to effectively implement the new federal Civil Marriage Act. What's more, these changes would also help to uphold personal rights and freedoms for non-residents in Ontario.

The second element of the proposed act would provide greater certainty to pension members and plans. Amendments to the Pension Benefits Act would, if passed, clarify spousal entitlements to pre-retirement death benefits as well as joint and survivor pensions. They would also provide clarity about who is eligible to consolidate their pension benefits. These changes are a prudent step for pension members and plans in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the third piece of the proposed act would help strengthen partnerships with the Ontario Medical Association. Individuals in this organization represent the diverse interests of Ontario's medical profession and key components of health care delivery in the province. The act proposes to amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act to better support representatives of the Ontario Medical Association. An immunity provision would prevent legal action against representatives of the association for acts done in good faith during negotiations with the government.

The fourth component of the act would better inform decision-making in our post-secondary education sector by amending the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to allow the government to collect more meaningful information about post-secondary students' enrolment and transfer activities. This would improve the evaluation and development of educational policies and programs by providing access to high-quality data that

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 51.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion in order to extend the sitting of the House till Monday, December 16.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Do we agree?

I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario rely on government to help deliver services that impact their lives each and every day; services like health

would enable more thorough analysis and research. These changes would benefit Ontario's students and, ultimately, our economy.

The fifth and final piece of the proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act would enhance the quality of non-emergency transport services for medically stable patients who require a stretcher in Ontario, through amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. New regulations would require proper inspection, certification and registration standards for vehicles, drivers and businesses. Together, these amendments would ensure greater accountability for stretcher transportation service providers and greater peace of mind for Ontarians who require these services.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act will bolster Ontario's post-secondary, health care, justice, pension and transportation legislation. This act is an important and necessary step forward. By supporting the passage of the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, the members of this Legislature can help strengthen public services and respond to the changing needs of our citizens.

ENERGY POLICIES

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Today I introduce the Electricity Amendment Act, 2013. The bill, if passed, makes modifications to the Electricity Act, 1998, that would bring Ontario into compliance with the World Trade Organization ruling on domestic content provisions and the feed-in tariff renewable energy program.

The bill would also continue our policy of lowering prices for renewable energy in Ontario. The changes the proposed bill would set into law are consistent with the rate mitigation actions taken in Ontario's updated long-term energy plan. Unveiled last week, the new long-term energy plan details the important steps Ontario has taken in the last nine months to mitigate electricity rates, including reduction in domestic content requirements, which would save ratepayers \$1.9 billion.

Other measures include renegotiating the green energy investment Samsung agreement, which reduced contract costs by \$3.7 billion; deferring the construction of two nuclear reactors, which would remove \$15 billion from the rate base; introducing new rules for wind generators that would reduce costs by up to \$200 million per year; and related Ontario Power Authority contract amendments, which would save ratepayers up to \$65 million over the next five years.

1600

Further to those steps, the changes proposed today would remove the need for the government to set domestic content requirements related to the Feed-In Tariff program. This will ensure the program complies with the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures. The government had previously reduced the FIT domestic content rules by 50%.

One of Ontario's objectives in establishing the Feed-In Tariff program was to kick-start the development of a new clean energy manufacturing and service sector. Ontario's clean energy initiatives have created 31,000 jobs and generated \$24 billion of investments in the province. The domestic content requirements in our Feed-In Tariff program were always intended to be temporary while our local industry was established—and approximately 7,000 megawatts of renewable energy contracts received the benefit of domestic content rules.

Today, Ontario boasts a strong renewable energy sector, with over 30 manufacturing firms currently supplying materials for local renewable energy projects and starting to export many, too.

Today, Ontario's wind and solar manufacturing facilities are poised to help supply the world, and Ontario remains committed to expanding renewable energy integration into our supply mix.

Earlier this year, the government committed to making 900 megawatts of new renewable capacity available between 2013 and 2018 for the FIT program—systems larger than 10 kilowatts and up to 500 kilowatts—and microFIT programs. Starting in 2014, FIT would have an annual procurement target of 150 megawatts, with a 50-megawatt annual target for microFIT. These projects are expected to create more than 6,000 jobs while producing enough electricity each year for more than 125,000 homes.

Further, through a new competitive procurement process, Ontario plans to make available for procurement up to 300 megawatts of wind, 140 megawatts of solar, 50 megawatts of bioenergy and 50 megawatts of hydroelectric capacity in 2014.

In 2015, the targets would be up to 300 megawatts of wind, 140 megawatts of solar, 50 megawatts of bioenergy and 45 megawatts of hydroelectric.

Any capacity that is not procured under these procurements or not developed under existing contracts would be reallocated for procurement in 2016 for each renewable technology.

The government has brought predictability and stability to renewable energy procurements, and the legislation introduced today would help ensure that price reduction is a core requirement of our upcoming renewable energy procurements.

I look forward to working with the opposition to see this amendment passed.

FIRE SAFETY SÉCURITÉ-INCENDIE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I am pleased to stand in the House to support the Ontario fire marshal's campaign to make this December the safest on record.

The holiday season is a special time of the year. It is a time to gather together to celebrate and enjoy the people in your life who are most important to you. It's a time to share meals, to help those less fortunate and to recognize

the higher functions of society: caring for one another, supporting each other and working towards a better world. It is an important time, and we should all take extra precautions to make sure it remains special and to ensure our loved ones are safe from fire.

C'est pourquoi il importe aujourd'hui de reconnaître que le mois de décembre est l'un des mois où les risques d'incendie résidentiel sont les plus grands. Nous devons unir nos efforts pour faire en sorte que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens célèbrent les fêtes en toute sécurité.

Last December, there were 60 injuries and eight tragic, unnecessary deaths due to fire. Unattended cooking, careless smoking and unsafe use of heating equipment are the top causes of fatal fires in December, with cooking fires accounting for nearly 20% of all home fires for the month. These fires are preventable.

Yesterday, the Ontario fire marshal, Ted Wiclawek, launched the 12 Days of Holiday Fire Safety campaign. On his website, there is a list of tips for Ontarians on how they can prevent fires, such as staying in the kitchen when cooking, smoking outside and extinguishing candles before leaving a room. It's also important to make sure that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are properly installed and have fresh batteries.

L'an dernier, dans 35 % des incendies évitables, soit il n'y avait aucun détecteur de fumée, soit les détecteurs ne fonctionnaient pas.

Last year, in 35% of preventable fires, there were either no smoke alarms or the alarms were not working.

Mr. Speaker, I am also asking all Ontarians who have Christmas trees and other decorations to keep them away from fireplaces and heaters, and to discard any damaged lights before decorating. These are simple but important precautions that we can all take that will help us keep our loved ones safe in our homes.

J'aimerais demander à toute la population ontarienne de garder ces conseils de sécurité à l'esprit et de collaborer à faire de ce mois de décembre le plus sûr de l'histoire de la province.

I also invite all Ontarians to visit the fire marshal's website to learn more about community and fire safety.

I wish everyone in the chamber and across the province a merry Christmas and a safe and happy holiday season.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Responses?

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll be splitting my time with two of my colleagues in the opposition, who will be addressing the other ministers.

I'll be addressing the Minister of Energy, and I simply want to say this: This is a sort of "told you so" moment. On the eve of the passage of what was then the Green Energy Act, which is still a monstrosity in our view, we warned this government that their Green Energy Act would create some problems. We have been talking about this for literally years: that there needed to be changes. Now, of course, in the backdrop, looking at some of the

issues we have faced in the last few weeks—a \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal, a request for a 30% rate hike from OPG, the long-term energy plan that says our rates will go up between 33% to 50% as an increase and, of course, yesterday, what I thought was probably one of the most appalling Auditor General's reports I have seen since I have taken my seat in this place, with respect to the energy sector—this government comes here and says, "Oh, this bill is going to save us money." Not so, Speaker.

Had they not proceeded the way they have with the Green Energy Act, with OPG, with the gas plants, with their previous long-term energy plans, we would not be in the mess we are in today.

I will look at this piece of legislation. We will consult with our advisers, particularly the legal advisers that we have, but let me be very clear to the minister: This is a government that has lost a lot of credibility with respect to the energy sector, and we are going to continue to hold their feet to the fire.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Mr. Speaker, I look on this as just an attempt to distract from the alarming record of this government. I think it's really just an attempt to turn the page and get people's attention away from what's really happening here, and that's really unfortunate.

Jobs are fleeing Ontario daily. It's not just a matter of not having a plan to keep those jobs; they have no plan to attract new jobs. Our leader, Tim Hudak, brings this matter up daily and challenges them to come forward with their plan, and we had hoped that by the end of this session they would do just that. But unfortunately, here we are, stuck with what we see today: nothing to do with jobs.

I'm not saying that there isn't any good in what they've put forward, because there are always good things in most things put forward. Nevertheless, it's not what we need here. We need something to enhance the economy of this province, and they're not willing to deal with those issues. I think it's time the people of Ontario had a say in the government of this province.

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FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Steve Clark: The holidays are a special time, as Ontarians gather with family and friends to celebrate the spirit of the season, but we know that a moment of inattention during the hustle and bustle this time of year brings with it can lead to a fire with tragic consequences. As the Ontario PC critic for community safety and correctional services, I rise on behalf of our caucus to urge everyone to make this a fire-free season.

To help make this the most fire-safe December ever, the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council has put a fire prevention spin on the classic Christmas carol The 12 Days of Christmas. The 12 days of fire safety offer On-

tarians a dozen tips to practise not only over the holidays, but all year round. Let me use this opportunity to wish Ontario's firefighters and all first responders a very merry Christmas and a happy holiday season.

Remember, as we're enjoying time with our families over the holidays, our firefighters, police and paramedics are on duty, ready to answer the call to help someone in need. If we do our part to be safe, we'll help ensure that those brave first responders get to go home and celebrate with their families when their shift is over.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A quick response to the Minister of Government Services—three quick points, actually. I want to thank him for being so charitable that in the spirit of Christmas and in the spirit of clarity, transparency and plenty of notice, we had a briefing at 2 o'clock. So that was good.

The second point is that, as all of you know, omnibus bills have become a growing menace at the provincial and at the federal level, but at least I can say that the government hasn't brought in the usual omnibus bill, which is usually this thick, and has decided to go through the Minister of Government Services and present a bill that is much, much smaller. So that's a positive thing that I can give you for your presentation of these changes you're making to five ministries.

And the third point is, we'll have a chance to review them. They don't appear to be that controversial, and we'll deal with them as they come up.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to respond to the introduction of the bill by the minister and his commentary. With regard to the bill, we'll read it, we'll consider the consequences, and we will be coming back with further commentary. Most of the minister's time was spent patting himself and the government on the back for the job they've done on the electricity file.

I was extraordinarily angry when I read the long-term energy plan, and frankly, my constituents across the board feel the same way. This government blew \$180 million in preparation for building nuclear power plants at Darlington that were never going to go ahead. Consultants got wealthy. Contractors got wealthy. A whole bunch of lawyers probably did pretty well. But that plant wasn't going to be built, and we blew \$180 million. No wonder people are angry.

This government continued the Progressive Conservative program of private power deals. The privatization that Mike Harris started, these guys fell in love with. They went further. They continue to turn over our electricity system to the point where we're spending somewhere between \$600 million and a billion dollars every year, simply in profits, to private power companies. That is hitting people in their pockets. It is making it difficult for them to keep their homes warm in winter. That is shameful.

But they didn't stop there. They blew \$1.1 billion on gas plants that they were warned were risky, expensive and not needed, but they went ahead until the political pain became too great, until it became clear that they were going to lose votes, and then a blank cheque was their parachute, one that all of us have to pay on demand.

This is a government that had the opportunity to do exactly what it's talking about in its long-term energy plan: invest in conservation. But look at what the Environmental Commissioner has to say: a government that's not going to meet its targets, that in the Environmental Commissioner's words, in the past has had a performance that is underwhelming.

Speaker, we get stuck in the pocket, we get stuck environmentally, we get stuck with the undermining of the industrial base of this province, and this government pats itself on the back. It should simply be ashamed—ashamed of what it has done to this province and to our electricity sector.

FIRE SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise, as the NDP community safety and correctional services critic, to respond to the minister's statement on the third annual 12 Days of Holiday Fire Safety campaign. In particular, I want to recognize the office of the fire marshal and the leadership of Fire Marshal Ted Wiclawek for developing, coordinating and implementing this very important public safety initiative.

At this festive time of year, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement of holiday shopping, decorating and entertaining, and to lose sight of the simple things we can do to ensure fire safety. The 12 Days of Holiday Fire Safety campaign brings attention to fire safety by reminding us of 12 fire prevention tips.

On behalf of my NDP caucus colleagues and our leader, Andrea Horwath, I wish all members of this House and all Ontarians a happy and fire-free holiday season.

PETITIONS

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I see one signature here from local musician Fred Eaglesmith, who was on David Letterman just a while back.

"Whereas the operation of cellular transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed or is occurring near residential areas in Haldimand—Norfolk and other communities across the province;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications equipment or services;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government."

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, hundreds of signatures from across the province.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree, affix my signature and send it down with page Jeffrey.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas virtually all legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

1620

"Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-

point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario ...

"In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures."

I certainly support this highly eloquent petition and send it to you via page Spencer.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to interrupt the member and ask her to set down the sign. I'll allow her to start again.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I've been receiving thousands of signatures, and I am pleased to present the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

"Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

"Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining cost-effective measures that will maintain

the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail.”

I agree with these thousands of people, affix my signature and send it to the table with Sarah.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, I present a few hundred petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads ‘that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I agree with this petition and present it to page Jonathan to bring down to the Clerk.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario....”

I certainly support this petition, will sign it and send it to you via page Najat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): In the five minutes left I would ask the members to abbreviate their petitions.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’ RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario.”

I affix my signature. Thank you very much for that time, and I hope it got into my minute time.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

On behalf of all the family pets that have been euthanized because of the way they look—hundreds and hundreds of them—I’m going to sign this and give it to Michaela to be delivered to the table.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas virtually all legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

"Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

"Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

"Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

"Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario...."

Speaker, I send this to you, signed, via page Sarah.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. John O'Toole: "Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of the many people suffering from IPF, and present it to Jeffrey, one of the pages.

1630

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, from hundreds of Ontarians across northern Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Najat to bring it down to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 30(c), I interrupt petitions and call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CANADA PENSION PLAN

RÉGIME DE PENSIONS DU CANADA

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the federal government to recognize that there is a need to improve and strengthen the retirement income system in Canada and take immediate steps to implement enhanced Canada pension plan benefits for all Canadians;

Whereas the Canada pension plan is the foundation of the nation's retirement income system, the maximum CPP retirement benefit for new retirees is just over \$1,000 per month or \$12,000 per year; and the percentage of new beneficiaries receiving maximum CPP retirement pension is only 6% and where the average Ontarian is receiving just under \$7,000 per year, or just 56% of the maximum benefit;

And recognizing the retirement savings challenge, the Ontario government has developed a comprehensive retirement income strategy and is leading the call for a CPP enhancement;

An enhancement to the CPP is critical to ensuring that Ontarians, particularly middle-income earners, have greater financial security in retirement;

The Ontario government has laid out and received agreement from other provinces on a number of objectives for strengthening the retirement income system,

including a CPP enhancement, focusing on today's workers, moderating the effect on the economy and improving the retirement incomes of those most at risk;

And while others will say we can put this off for another day, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario disagrees and encourages the federal government to agree to enhance CPP now;

And that this assembly agree that Ontario should pursue its own solution to enhancing retirement security should the federal government not respond in a timely fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Wynne has moved government notice of motion number 40. I recognize the Premier to lead off the debate.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to be able to speak to this motion, and I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Finance. I will just say—and I'll speak to this later—that the Minister of Finance, the minister responsible for seniors' affairs and I had the opportunity to meet with CARP, the organization representing seniors across the country. I'll be interested to share their perspective, but they are very supportive of this direction.

Since being sworn into office almost a year ago, I've been travelling across Ontario. I've been travelling to every corner of the province. I've been to almost every riding in Ontario, and everywhere I go, I meet hard-working men and women who are doing so much for their families. They are working hard to make sure that in the immediate term their families have what they need and that in the future they have what they need. I know that they're facing challenges. One of those challenges that I have heard about and they have talked to me about is making sure that they can save for the future.

In October, I was lucky enough to visit the home of Tommaso Altrui and Serena Bird in Brampton. They have their own business and they're expecting their fourth child. They are very energetic young people involved in the community and in their business, but like so many people in this province, they don't have a company pension, so when they retire, they will depend entirely on their savings and their contributions to the CPP. They worry—so do I—that this will not be enough. They also talked to me about their employees; they are concerned for themselves, but they're also concerned for their employees.

As the Globe and Mail noted recently, three out of four eligible individuals did not contribute anything to their RRSPs in 2010, despite their generous tax deductions. I think that's important, because often what comes back when we talk on this subject is the notion that there are mechanisms; there are RRSPs. If we look at not contributing anything, that three out of four eligible people didn't contribute anything in 2010, I think it's an indication that there is an issue here. The burden of planning for retirement rests overwhelmingly on hard-working people like Tommaso and Serena. As government, I believe we need to do more to make sure they have the support they need as they get older. This is an issue that is confronting us at both the provincial and federal levels of government.

The Bank of Montreal recently released a study showing that more than half of Canadians are expected to retire with a mortgage. The fact is that many Canadians are unprepared for retirement, even as they continue to work hard and to contribute to the economy.

This is an issue that we need to address together. This is not an issue that can be dealt with in isolation from one another. It's our responsibility to make sure the people of Ontario can retire securely with comfort, dignity and confidence.

Il est notre responsabilité de nous assurer que la population de l'Ontario puisse prendre une retraite assurée, dans le confort, dans la dignité et sans souci.

This is a social imperative; yes, it is that. But it's also an economic imperative. If we don't address this looming crisis, we'll all have to contend with the consequences of that, of people not having access to the supports that they need, of people needing support after the fact, when there wasn't action taken before their retirement.

This is why our government is taking action, Mr. Speaker. This is why we believe that it's very important that we call on the federal government at this time to work with us. As the chair of this year's Council of the Federation of Canada's Premiers, I have been working with my provincial counterparts to advocate for an enhancement to the CPP.

When my fellow Premiers met in beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake this past summer, this July, I made sure that this issue was on the agenda. My colleagues agreed that there is a need to consider options for enhancing the retirement income system, including the Canada pension plan, the Quebec pension plan and the pooled registered pension plans, the PRPPs. We agreed at that meeting that a modest, phased-in and fully funded expansion of CPP-QPP would increase retirement income for future retirees and that it's consistent with the efforts to improve labour mobility and enhance labour market efficiency. Those are obviously concerns, Mr. Speaker.

Our finance minister has been working with his counterparts, too. But what we have said is that if an agreement on enhancing the CPP cannot be found, then we are prepared to move forward with a made-in-Ontario solution. That is the degree to which we feel that this is critical, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think this should be a partisan issue. I hear mutterings from across the floor; I won't call them heckles at this point. But I really believe that this is something that we all should be concerned about.

In fact, in our country's proud history, we can see the demonstration that if we work together on this front, then we can make progress. When CPP was last in need of an overhaul, in the 1990s, as life expectancies continued to expand, federal and provincial governments worked together to return the system to a surer financial footing. I'm sure that members in this House will remember that and remember the degree to which there was collaborative action. We've done it before, and we can do it again.

I don't believe that we have time to waste. I think that we can't simply allow the federal government to reject a

CPP enhancement without any indication of how they will work to address this serious issue.

I think it's important to note that there is no one across the country saying that this isn't an issue. There is broad consensus that this is an issue. I think the reality of that means that we need to find a way to move forward. An enhancement to the CPP can bolster retirement incomes in a way that's fair, universal and efficient.

Une amélioration au régime de pensions du Canada peut augmenter les revenus de retraite de façon juste, universelle et efficace.

It promises good return on a stable income in retirement, it will help to protect our most vulnerable citizens, and it will encourage people to plan for their own future.

I reject the arguments of those who I believe wrongly characterize this planned savings as some kind of punishment, that there's a punitive aspect to it. That is not what this is, Mr. Speaker. Thinking about the future and making sure that we're all adequately prepared should not be something that we argue over, or an idea that diminishes or is put forward only for political gain. It is a chance for us to look at the future with confidence and, quite frankly, with vision. It allows us to stand together on an issue that will touch us all, and our children and our grandchildren. The population is aging, and we are making sure that we prepare our population for retirement and that that is our collective responsibility.

1640

I want to commend CARP. As I said, the Minister of Finance and I and the minister responsible for seniors' affairs had the opportunity to meet with representatives from CARP today, and there were representatives from across the country. There was a representative from British Columbia, from Nova Scotia, from Quebec and from Alberta, and they had come here specifically because they wanted to meet in advance of the Ministers of Finance from across the country getting together this weekend. I just want to note that they have done a survey of their members. They have strong support, and in fact political support, for this initiative. They noted today that their commitment to this goes to the parties that they will support in upcoming elections, because they believe that this is so important. Remember, these are people for whom this will not be a benefit. This will not have an impact on their retirement. These are people who are either into their retirement or about to go into their retirement, so this is a group that is advocating for future generations. I think, Mr. Speaker, they make compelling arguments.

Susan Eng, who is the vice-president of advocacy for CARP, says, "The politicians now have an opportunity to improve retirement security for a generation. But they have to take the first step now." That is the position of CARP, and I think it is a compelling one.

I had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Harper last week. I raised this issue. I'll continue to advocate on this issue in my capacity as Premier and as the chair of the Council of the Federation and in all of my interactions with my provincial colleagues. It is that important to us, Mr. Speaker, that we find a way to take action on this.

Our government has a plan to grow the economy and create jobs by investing in people. We've been clear that investments in infrastructure and the creation of a business environment that is dynamic are extremely important and are fundamental to our job creation plan.

Taking care of the people of Ontario, hard-working people like Tommaso and Serena and everyone like them, in their retirement is a major commitment that we are making, and that is why we're calling on the federal government to work with us on this and to work across the country so that we can find a consensus to make sure that we can move forward and that we can ensure that retirement for the people of the province and the country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion in the House on an issue that will have a profound effect on all Ontarians and indeed all Canadians.

The Ontario government has recently introduced a three-part plan to grow our economy and create jobs, which includes investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate, as the Premier has just stated.

As part of our plan to invest in people, we want to help ensure that Ontarians and all Canadians can retire comfortably. Our government has been taking action over the last number of years with a multi-faceted approach to enhance the retirement income system. But we know that there's more to do, which is why we continue to advocate for an enhancement to the Canada pension plan, known as CPP.

The CPP is the foundation of the nation's retirement income system, and it offers tremendous advantages as a retirement savings vehicle. It provides benefits throughout the life of a retiree and helps ensure that people do not run out of money in their retirement. It operates at a low cost and has an excellent track record for investment.

Although this program has served generations of Ontarians well, we must make improvements now if we're to ensure that today's middle-income workers are able to save enough to ensure that they have sufficient income when they retire.

The maximum CPP retirement benefit for new retirees is just over \$1,000 per month, or \$12,000 a year. The percentage, however, of new beneficiaries receiving the maximum CPP retirement pension is only 6%. The average Ontarian is receiving just under \$7,000 a year. That's about 56% of the maximum benefit.

An enhancement to the CPP is critical to ensuring that Ontarians, particularly middle-income earners, have greater financial security in their retirement.

Recently, Premiers from across the country agreed to four objectives for enhancement to the CPP. These include:

(1) a fully funded enhancement that focuses on today's workers;

(2) undertaking further analysis and evaluation of the short and longer-term effects on businesses, families and the economy;

(3) improving the retirement incomes of middle-income workers who are most at risk of having insufficient retirement savings; and

(4) protecting lower-income workers.

These objectives should inform the design of a CPP enhancement.

Some have raised concerns that a CPP enhancement would harm the economy. However, a plan to enhance the CPP would include a two-year notice period and adequate phase-in for contribution increases that would give businesses, workers and the economy time to adjust.

There is also a significant economic impact to this enhancement. Additional CPP contributions would be re-invested, both domestically and internationally, creating jobs and economic growth. And over the longer term, higher retirement income would contribute to a greater quality of life for retirees and a stronger economy.

A recent Boston Consulting Group study found that defined benefit pension plans such as CPP would reduce costs to taxpayers and, through the benefits they pay out, contribute tens of billions of dollars to the economy and to the coffers of governments across Canada. In other words, it has economic benefits now and reduces costs in the long term. That, Mr. Speaker, is a win-win.

Yet, incredibly, the federal government has resisted calls to initiate these enhancements and these discussions on CPP. They say that we can put off preparation for an enhancement to the Canada pension plan for another day. We strongly disagree. We don't have time to waste. We must take action now, so that today's workers have more security in their retirement tomorrow. We all pay a heavy price for the federal government's inaction. Ontarians and all Canadians deserve leadership on this issue.

Ontario continues to work with other provinces and territories to find a Canada-wide agreement on CPP enhancement. Next week, at the federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting, we will continue our discussions, and if the federal government continues to block provincial efforts to help secure a better retirement, we will move to implement a made-in-Ontario alternative. We will protect future retirees, protect today's workers and invest in the people of Ontario.

Provinces across Canada have agreed that an enhancement to the CPP is necessary, and all agree and understand that we have a problem and an issue. Even the members of the federal government recognize that a problem exists. We are at the table, encouraging the federal government to ensure that we resolve that problem for the benefit of our future generations, and that is what seniors at CARP did today. They're not looking for themselves; they're looking for the benefit of our future, as we all should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to the motion before us today. I just want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I think the first thing that comes to mind when you are looking at this—because when you look at the motion, it

says “to improve and strengthen the retirement income system in Canada.” It says “the Ontario government has developed a comprehensive retirement income strategy,” and it says the enhancement of “CPP is critical to ensuring that Ontarians, particularly middle-income earners ...” and, finally, “that this assembly agree that Ontario should pursue its own solution to enhancing retirement security should the federal government not respond in a timely fashion.”

1650

Mr. Speaker, I've pulled these four parts to this motion, because what I notice, as I look through them, is that there's absolutely no indication of how this would happen or how it would actually be paid for. So what we're being asked, as an assembly, is to virtually sign a blank cheque to look at this, if we were to continue discussion. But this motion actually carries sort of a bit of a threat at the end: that Ontario will pursue its own solution.

I want to begin by saying that the issue of pensions is something on which governments have, in greater and lesser extent, in varying extent, come to the table in their own communities, in their own jurisdictions, to recognize the importance of looking, again, at pensions. When I say “again,” I mean that there have been models of pensions for many decades, but there are circumstances that many countries and provinces and American states recognize today as a new set of issues, where they might have identified, as many did, the tsunami of people who would be retiring now because they were the baby boomers. So the issues around that group reaching retirement age has been something that people have talked about for years, quite frankly.

Mostly, they've talked about the kind of pressures that that would leave on health care, on institutions, the kind of impact it would have when people left the labour force. We have all kinds of studies that have been done: the 25 jobs that have too many people applying for them, the top 25 that are crying out for people. We know that in agriculture the average age is 56 years. Truck drivers, I believe, are older. There is all kinds of work that has been done to try to build awareness that, as this group of people moved through their life patterns, there would be changes.

I certainly remember that it had a great deal to do with the boom in education, in building community colleges and increasing universities and things like that. But what's come to pass most recently in this ongoing conversation about the impact of such a wide group of people, large number of people, coming through in a relatively short time is just becoming better and better understood in terms of the question of pensions, because there are things we can't change about pensions. One of them is, as well as what I refer to as the tsunami of retirees, that those people now have a much longer life expectancy than their predecessors who went through the retirement process.

Years ago, those pensions were determined on the basis of retiring at 65, maybe working for 30 years or something like that, and then probably the expectation

was that the pension might need to be there for somewhere between three and five years, but nothing in the way that today's pensions have to look at life expectancy. People would look at the fact that now, for instance, teachers and many others who retire at an age of less than 65 work for 25 years and collect a pension for 30. This kind of thing, plus the changes in the numbers of people coming along behind, has created a sudden urgency on the part of the people who think about retirement plans and the kind of crisis that they see, because the third thing over which we have no control is a low return on investments.

For the last 10 to 12 years, people have been watching that particular part of the complex retirement problem and realizing that the assumptions they made years ago simply don't stand up to scrutiny today; they just aren't where we are. It was prudent to be looking at a return on investment a few years ago, before the decline, of 6% to 8%. That would be a very modest, prudent kind of expectation. But today that's something that you dream about, that you remember. We're looking at an entirely different framework in which to look at pensions: life expectancy, the number of retirees, the low interest rates. These are all things over which we have no direct control. There are things that can be altered, such as the retirement age, such as looking at career-averaging of income as opposed to the last five years, such as the question of basing a pension on 70% of your earnings. Those are the kinds of details that people can work with in looking at how to update pensions.

I think it's important to stop at this point and remind everybody that there are workplace pensions for only about 30% of the population. The other 70% do not have a workplace pension. So they look at the fact that as people in the community, as Ontarians, they of course are providing for the 70% or whatever is the amount on workplace pensions—because most of them are in the public sector—they are supporting those pensions. It has become obvious, when people look at the manner in which these have been structured, that because of life expectancy and the amounts of money we're talking about, we have the issue of the potential for unfunded liabilities. What that means is, quite simply, the fact that that kind of money has not been set aside. Where at one time the money that was collected by you and your employer would have tidily taken you into a fairly safe retirement financially, that's not the case. Because of those low interest rates, you're looking at a tear in that social fabric, of the amount of money collected for you. All of a sudden, it needs to be between \$1 million and \$2 million to provide you with what had been expected.

The whole area of pensions, then, is something that has taken up the interest of many, many countries and states, as I mentioned. Ontario has come somewhat late to the conversation, but the advantage to that is that you have other jurisdictions to look at. You have ones that have chosen to do nothing, in which case you have the public sector people in Detroit getting 10 cents on the dollar, and you have cities in California that have declared bankruptcy; or you can go to countries like

Holland and Britain, Rhode Island and most recently New Brunswick, where people have come together, understood the challenge of the day and worked on a process that would better suit the circumstances we have today.

1700

The government, in its motion—and I read out some of the key parts to that—failed to include anything about the cost. We know that public sector pensions are paid 50% by the individual, and the other half by the government, which, of course, indirectly is the taxpayer. I think anyone who looks at this motion today is going to say, "Well, this is interesting." Usually most of us want more money, so we might not be in disagreement with the notion of increasing, but there's no cost. Nothing here tells us what this would cost. Nothing here tells us how it would actually happen.

So I thought it was important to look about for the cost. The first thing that comes to mind is, of course, that it's paid for by employer and employee, that each has to pay an equal amount into the CPP. Well, there are a couple of things that are really important to understand about that.

The first thing is, obviously, you have to be employed. If you happen to belong to the long, two-and-a-half-page list of people who have lost their jobs in the last few months, you're not part of this conversation, because you're not in a position as an employed person. So the first thing we have to understand is that there are close to a million people in this province for whom this conversation is a waste of time until they get a job.

The other part of the equation is those people who are the employers who are paying in. Well, that is after they have paid the global positioning bill part of their hydro bill, the other costs to energy, the increase in municipal taxes, the burden of regulation, and the list goes on and on and on. We have the picture, then, of something that comes from a much earlier period: Atlas, the man with his back bent over, holding up the entire globe. The business people of Ontario are now like Atlas, bent over with the entire fiscal responsibility of all of these programs on top of them.

Sometimes people forget that the only way that government can extract any tax money, any licence, any fee, any of these costs, from business is when they make a profit. It becomes harder and harder for people to make a profit, and therefore more and more difficult.

When you start adding on—and this is, as I understand, to double the contribution to CPP—you are talking now about one more item put on that poor business person whose image you should see as Atlas bent over with the world on his back. As I say, people forget. They are always talking about, "Well, business can pay for this" or, "We'll make this opportunity," and regulations will continue to rise and the cost associated with them. But they have to make a profit. When we start looking at what the challenges are to making a profit, it brings me to the 12th annual report of Roger Martin. On page 19, it says, "Ontario remains in 14th place out of 16 peer juris-

dictions, even after years of improvements and recommendations from the task force.”

Now, I can tell you that as an elected member I have always looked forward to these annual reports, because they provide MPPs and obviously the public—because the booklets are online, they are available, they’re public information—an analysis every year. So the statistics that are used are up to date. They concentrate. Their purpose is to provide a picture of Ontario in order to give not only us as MPPs but also the public at large the opportunity to have an in-depth look at what we are doing and how well we are doing.

I find it very discouraging that after, I think, 13 years—sorry, 12; the 12th annual report. I find it very discouraging that after 12 years of providing advice, obviously largely to this government, we are 14th out of 16. People need to understand how much that affects what we are able to do; what we are able to invest in; what we are able to do to provide infrastructure and future opportunities; what we are able to do encouraging entrepreneurship and investment in our community and providing jobs for our next generations—our children and our grandchildren.

So I have a problem. We have this motion; nothing to do with how it’s paid for. I’ve suggested to you what the problems are, because the taxpayer is the payee. Then you have to wonder, well, who really wants this? If you start examining how difficult this would be, what are the kinds of problems?

I’ve suggested to you that the private sector is stretched to the max. They see everything coming at them as an increased cost of doing business. The regulatory burden is costly for people, and sometimes it’s very difficult for people to actually conform. I have two stories from my riding. One is that MOE said a door should be hung a certain way, and the Ministry of Labour said it should be hung the opposite way—same door. I have another constituent who has the MOE saying, “This is the level of chlorine that’s allowed,” and the Ministry of Health saying, “No, you have to conform to our needs,” which is a higher level of chlorine. So it’s no wonder that people have difficulty being able to do this.

I waved, a moment ago, at the list of people in this province who have lost their jobs. In my riding last week, there was an announcement that 550 jobs would be leaving the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury. These are real people. These are people who have families. These are people who haven’t done anything wrong, who find themselves in a precarious position with absolutely no idea how precarious or how difficult it will be for them to find another job. Are they in a position to be able to find a job? Do they have the right skill set? Are people going to look at them as experienced or as yesterday’s person? I think it would be very difficult for them to be convinced that they should double their CPP contribution—and, of course, they can’t until they get a job.

1710

There is the question, then, about why we are having this conversation. Well, one of the reasons is that the Canadian Labour Congress and other unions have strong-

ly supported the increase of CPP. At first, I didn’t quite follow the line there, until I realized that by increasing the amount for CPP, that reduces the amount that they are responsible for in the amount of the person’s pension. So by encouraging this government to suggest this and encourage others to do it, it would actually then help with the size of the unfunded liability. This is, I think, probably why we see specific areas then looking at supporting this.

I suggest to you that too many people are having trouble being able to make ends meet. You have all kinds of people who have small businesses who are obliged to pay both sides of their CPP, and they can’t manage that.

The other thing is that I’m concerned about major companies, should this go forward, because we’re talking about—I’m not sure; I have too many notes. But we’re talking about \$3 billion that would be added to the burden of contribution. So it’s a rhetorical question, but I ask, does this mean that companies like GM are going to stay when they have that kind of additional cost added to their bottom line?

I think that in many cases we’ve looked at—and I certainly have talked to businesses in my riding that feel they are making some progress, obviously not the one with the 550 people out of work, but others who feel that we have a very fragile economy, one that we need to be very careful with. When we look at that kind of burden, it doesn’t matter if you are a small business or a big business. You know the old story about how to start a small business: Begin with a big one. I’m not sure that that’s changed very much here.

We have to look at the whole picture in this motion. It is suggesting a track that is very, very challenging for business and for people. I go back to what I suggested earlier: The only way you can pay is when you make a profit. If you are in the position of being assaulted on all sides by licences and fees and taxes—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: All that red tape.

Mrs. Julia Munro: —and the red tape that is costly—even minimum wage. Roger Martin’s document, about four years ago, dealt with the impact of minimum wage. I know that in my riding there was a businessman who explained to me that he always hired kids to give them their first job opportunity. He recognized that they needed greater supervision, but he always thought it was a good idea to provide them with that first job opportunity. But there reached a point where he could have three students at minimum wage or two adults who didn’t require the same supervision who would actually be doing the job of three younger people. Well, it’s a tough call. He’s obviously going to take two adults that he knows he doesn’t have to supervise the same way as the three young kids. But he recognized the value of being able to give those kids jobs. So it’s very unfortunate that that kind of thinking has also surfaced when there are so many situations that we need to understand.

Yesterday, in the National Post, Andrew Coyne had an article about, “Why increase CPP levies when government could force people to save more in a personal account?”

In the few minutes that remain, I want to talk about the PRPP. The Minister of Finance did make reference to it, and it was included in the budget. The week before, I had brought it forward as a private member's bill. Quebec is the first province that has done this, that has completed the legislation that is required, and other provinces are looking at moving in this direction. I think if we were to ask someone, "Would you rather put the money into a PRPP with your name on it, or do you want to increase the CPP?"—I think people need to understand that there are other things. Critics look at this and say, "Well, look, they don't use up all the RRSP room."

Our party has, in its white paper on retirement security, recognized the fact that the most important thing for people to have in this financial environment is a higher level of financial literacy. I've had conversations with people about RRSPs—"Oh, no, I don't have an RRSP." You say, "Have you ever looked into it?" "I'm not rich. I wouldn't be able to do that." "But it's not just for rich people." "Well, I wouldn't know what questions to ask." I said, "That's okay. That's their job: to answer, to give you an idea that would then stimulate you to ask questions."

I think we have a great deal to do, as a government, to encourage people to have greater confidence in building up their own sense of financial literacy. The result of that is that they will then have a greater sense of responsibility: "I can do this." Maybe they can do a tax-free savings account. There are so many opportunities, but it's something we haven't done a good job on. Parents don't discuss it with their kids. Kids don't have savings accounts. We need a culture of recognition that, at the end of the day, you do have a personal fiduciary responsibility and the sooner you learn a bit about it, the better.

One of my constituents, who is the person responsible for writing up the agreement when someone buys a car at the car dealership she works at, came to me about three years ago and said, "You've got to do something. You cannot believe the number of people I see coming into this car dealership who are in their late 20s or early 30s, who sit down to make a deal and write up a bill of sale, and they have no credit rating because they declared bankruptcy. They have no idea that these are the consequences of doing that." It's those kinds of things.

I'm sure all of us—people who live from one credit card to the next that are maxed out, paying the interest rate and trying to lurch from one pay to another. These are things that are part of the whole picture of recognizing what the government can do with a Canada pension plan and what it means to have OAS, old age security. What do these things mean? What do they mean for me, and what should I be doing?

1720

Understand that the only way to increase the role of the private sector is, they have to make a profit. They can't be hamstrung by government costs and regulations to be able to contribute to the wider society. People are in the same boat. They don't have any extra money. They are living from paycheque to paycheque. They have no ability to sign up.

I think that the government is hoping or planning that this proposal will be something that they can use next week to lay the table for their plan. I think they share it with PEI, as an argument that they would like to see this increased CPP. But certainly, the commentators in any of the papers have demonstrated significant information that shows the limitations, generally, not supporting enhancing the CPP at this time.

I think the government should keep in mind that, in this motion, there is nothing to give us any sense of how that cost is going to be absorbed and who is going to be able to pay that kind of money. CFIB and all the businesses that are still here certainly don't have that kind of confidence that they want to see the government actually pursue this particular idea at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I almost got caught off guard. I didn't realize I was joining the debate quite at this time. But I'm quite prepared to do so because it's not a hard motion to have some problems with.

You have to ask right off the bat, Speaker, what is the motivation of the government? You know, when Matlock or Kojak or any of those TV cops were investigating a murder, one of the things they looked for was, what was the motive? What is the motive of the government to bring forth this motion today? We have to point out to the folks there in TV land that the government is generally spending most of its time in fantasyland or cover-up land. There's two different places.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe the word "cover-up" has been repeatedly ruled out of order by the Speaker, and I would ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll withdraw it. I thought the minister was not paying attention, but clearly she is. I'll have to be careful.

They spend a lot of time in fantasyland and a lot of time in changing-the-channel land.

They bring out this motion, and it's all about an enhanced CPP. They're not saying a word about what that is going to cost or who is going to pay for it. Kathleen Wynne has been travelling around, giving people the impression that we're just going to double the CPP that people are going to get years down the road; it's not going to cost you a cent.

She's right about one thing: There's an awful lot of people worried in this province.

There is water coming for me, right? Two waters? Here they are. Look at that—as I speak. Thank you very much, William.

There is a great deal of concern about retirement security for people in this country, particularly in this province. What is driving that concern, much of it, is the recognition that not maybe so much us—we're the ones who should be bearing some responsibility—but the next generation is going to bear so much responsibility for the

mess that this government has made of the fiscal condition of the province of Ontario, and it's hurting everybody.

When a government runs deficits like this government is running, at \$12 billion, and the debt is now at \$273 billion, that isn't just a problem for the services the government provides. It's a problem for our economy. It's a problem for every business that is a job creator out there.

What is Kathleen Wynne's position on dealing with the debt and the deficit? It's funny, she used in her motion something about, "And while others will say we can put this off for another day"—my goodness gracious. Who would know better about putting things off for another day than Kathleen Wynne? That is what she is doing with the debt of this province. Instead of attacking this debt—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for interrupting, but, again, I would remind the House that it's appropriate to use ministers' titles, by calling her the Premier, and members by their ridings.

I return to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I think everyone understands we go by "Premier." Do I have to say "Premier Kathleen Wynne"?

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'm just trying to economize my words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): If you would just say "the Premier," that would be conforming with the rules of the House.

Mr. John Yakubuski: "The Wynne government" is legal?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. Yes.

Mr. John Yakubuski: "The Wynne government" is legal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. It is.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Oh. So, Mr. Delaney, you're wrong again, you see.

While the Wynne government, who's headed by the Premier—she uses this phrase, "And while others will say we can put this off for another day..." This is a sad commentary that this is what they rely on the week before this Legislature rises, that this is the message they want to put out there. This is what they want to put in people's Christmas stockings: a vague, vacuous, empty, meaningless motion that we'd like to see the CPP rise. It is going to make for pretty poor Christmas cake, this motion.

You know what would make a difference to people's lives? If there actually was a jobs plan. She's talking about enhancing the CPP. Do you know how much a person gets with CPP if they don't have a job? No deduction from the cheque, but no cheque. And if they've never had a job, no cheque when they retire. Because what are they retiring from? They're retiring from unemployment in the province of Ontario, which gets worse and worse and worse every day under this Kathleen Wynne government—the Wynne government.

We heard so much last week about job losses: Kellogg's; a few weeks ago, Heinz. The hundreds of people who lose their job—that's just a part of the pain that is going to be felt. All of the other ancillary industries, peripheral services that are dependent upon the people who have those jobs—the people at Heinz lost their jobs; they're not going to be making ketchup. What about the truckers who used to make that stuff around? What about the people who make bottles? What about the people who make labels? They're all affected. Then, Kellogg's—it's not just the Special K. It's everybody else who's involved in the chain of making this economy work. What is the reaction of the government? "Oh, ho-hum. It's a transition." It's very, very scary what we're seeing here today.

This is about picking a fight with the federal government, because they're losing their own battle here. And the auditor's report this week—we've all seen it. It's the thickest—one of the thickest, one of the most scathing reports on the performance of a government in my time in office here and perhaps in the history of Ontario. So what does the Premier do? "Oh, we don't want to talk about the auditor's report. We want to talk about some vague promise to people about maybe someday down the road, if the federal government doesn't play baseball with us, we're going to bring in a new pension plan." You're going broke in this province, and you're talking about a new pension plan.

It's time you got your fiscal house in order here. It's time you made some kind of effort to say to the people of Ontario, "There will be a future to believe in. There will be a future in Ontario, because this government cares enough to get its own fiscal house in order so that your job tomorrow will be easier—will be easier." But, no, "Let's change the channel. Let's divert people's attention." I don't know what the announcement will be tomorrow, but they'll come up with something. They don't want to talk about the Auditor General's report.

1730

It's interesting, on the very day that we're finding that the pension plans at OPG, where the employees who get massive severances when they leave—and the pensions: They're contributing about one fourth to one fifth of what they should be putting in.

So we've got these kinds of pension plans in this book. And in the fantasy book that Kathleen Wynne brought out today, she's going to give pensions to everybody else.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Hey, he just talked to you about names.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Oh, I made a mistake there; I'm sorry. The Wynne government brings out this plan for higher pensions in the future.

On the surface, I understand that there's going to be a need for more retirement security. The problem is how they're going about it. They want to pick a fight with the federal government. They want to promise all kinds of other things, but they don't want to look in the mirror.

My old friend from Home Hardware, Walter Hachborn, always used to say, "If you can face the man

in the mirror every morning and honestly say, 'I'm doing the best I can and I'm doing what I believe is right,' you're well on your way to doing the right thing." But they refuse to look in the mirror. They've painted the mirror black so there is no reflection. They don't want to see what the mirror says to them. Do you know what the mirror would say to them, in boxcar letters? It would say, "Stop doing what you're doing. You're putting an albatross around the neck of every child being born today, the ones who will be born tomorrow and the ones who will be born years from now, because you're being irresponsible about how you conduct your business here in the province of Ontario."

Interruption.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You can't do that. No, I don't think you can. I don't know if you can. Well, do a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much to my honourable colleague—and my apologies for interrupting his speech. I just want to ask the House to welcome my cousin Janmeet Kaur, who is joining us today from Seattle. She's a Toronto native, but she lives in Seattle now. Please join me in welcoming her here today. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's technically not a point of order, but we welcome you to the Legislature.

I'm pleased to return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Welcome from Seattle. I actually needed a bit of a break to get some water in me.

Okay, so we're done with that. I was wondering who was giving me that note.

I just want to speak calmly for a moment. If this government would simply reflect upon its own record of the last 10 years and ask themselves—spending in this province when this government came into office was \$68 billion a year. It is now over \$126 billion, and the Premier has promised it's going up by another \$5 billion next year. She's going to spend more because she wants to go to the people and say, "You can have it all, and I'm going to give it to you. The only thing I want you to do is re-elect me." Oh, I'm sorry she has never actually been elected—but she wants to get elected as Premier.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She has never been elected as Premier.

She wants to go to the people with the goody bag. She wants to be like the tooth fairy. I think she believes that if she just shakes a little fairy dust on her cereal—the cornflakes that won't be done here anymore—that this problem is going to go away.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I respect the member's freedom to have a point of view, but standing order 23(h) prohibits him from ascribing motive or making assertions or allegations about another member, regardless of whether the member is in fact part of the executive council.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I didn't hear the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke make any allegation. I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. Every day that I'm in this chamber, I see more good reasons why you sit in that chair: because your wise decisions to put down the frivolous objections of the government side sometimes do impress me. One of these days you're probably going to rule against me, and we'll have a chat about that, too.

Anyway, I think it is very, very discouraging if you live in the province of Ontario and you wake up in the morning and you read the newspapers. You shake your head, and you actually ask yourself, "What are these people thinking? Do they really believe that problems just go away?"

I want you to think about your own house out there. Okay? We're speaking hypothetically, Speaker. So you've been living a little high on the hog, you've been spending a little more than you're taking in, you've been spending a bit of the children's inheritance, as they say, going and having a good time. But you know what? You're making a lot of friends down at the bar because you're a happy-go-lucky fellow, going in there and spending money. You're garnering favours with people.

But, all of a sudden, someday you get hit on the head, I guess. This comes across to you, and you say, "I can't continue to do this. I'm going to go bankrupt, and my children are going to be left with nothing. I've got to reform. I've got to change my behaviour. I've got to become more responsible. I've got to shape up."

That's what this government needs to do. It needs to shape up. It needs to reform its behaviour. It can't just keep going on and spending other people's money and hoping that the problem will go away. If you spend more money than you take in, there's only one remedy: You have to either reduce the amount of money you're spending, or you have to take more money in. This government has already tapped the people out there.

The Premier said—what was it, 50% or more than 50% of eligible people didn't make a contribution—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Seventy per cent.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Seventy per cent of eligible people did not make a contribution to their RRSP last year. Now, do you think they decided not to make that contribution because they just didn't want to, or is it possible that, in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario, they can't afford to make that contribution, tax-sheltered or otherwise? There's nothing left at the end of the month when the bills are paid—hey, they can't even pay the bills. The hydro bill comes in now, and it takes them four days to open it. They haven't got the courage to open it for at least four days, because they know the news is bad.

That's what they're faced with in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the Minister of Rural Affairs that he may have the chance to have the floor here shortly. I don't know.

I say to the Wynne government, if you truly believe in what you're doing, well, table the legislation, and make sure in that legislation—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: She said she would.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, that is just empty words. That would be the first time the Liberals lied, wouldn't it? Oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to withdraw his—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Good ruling, Speaker. I withdraw. Good ruling on that one, too.

The minister says that the Premier has said if the federal government doesn't do what she demands of them, she's going to bring in the legislation. Oh, we'll be looking forward to that. The Liberals have never broken a promise, have they?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you aware of it, Minister? Have the Liberals broken any promises?

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, right.

So, Speaker, I believe that this is just another diversion tactic to take people away from the real issues facing Ontario.

Several weeks ago, our leader, Tim Hudak, sat down with the Premier, and he negotiated and worked with her on a plan, a programming motion, to get through many of the bills that this government wanted to get through. But the understanding was that after that was done, there would be a jobs plan come forward to help the people of Ontario—real help for real people. You know what we got? Zero. Nothing.

1740

Speaker, for that, I believe this government clearly has run out of ideas. In my opinion, and I believe in the opinion of people across the province, it has run out of time.

So, Speaker, I move that the following be added at the end of the motion—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Would you like me to do that one more time?

I move that the following be added at the end of the motion:

"And that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario believes that the Wynne government has failed to put forward a jobs plan over two months after the House cleared the decks;

"Therefore, it is the opinion of this House that the House leaders of all three recognized parties shall schedule a debate one week following the passage of this motion and a vote on the motion of want of confidence standing in the name of Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Yakabuski has moved that the following be added at the end of the motion:

"And that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario believes that the Wynne government has failed to put forward a jobs plan over two months after the House cleared the decks;

"Therefore, it is the opinion of this House that the House leaders of all three recognized parties shall schedule a debate one week following the passage of this motion and a vote on the motion of want of confidence standing in the name of Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey."

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke still has the floor, debating the amendment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. Now, let's talk about debating this amendment.

I believe that when this motion is called and when it is passed, a debate of this House will clearly show—and I believe that my friends to my left, both philosophically and physically, geographically and however we want to put it, are going to side with that, because I have listened to their leader over the last couple of days. I have listened to Ms. Horwath say repeatedly that this government is done, it's finished—I'm paraphrasing—it's corrupt, and it has to be stopped. It has to be stopped.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's an unparliamentary comment again. I would ask the member to withdraw the word "corrupt."

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker. I was just paraphrasing the NDP leader.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought you were referring to the Canadian Senate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no; speaking of the government.

When this amendment to the motion is debated, I am hopeful that our friends to my left will side not with Jim Wilson, MPP Simcoe-Grey, not with the PC caucus, not with Tim Hudak, but with the people of Ontario, who cannot accept what is going on from that side of the House any longer. We believe absolutely that if the people are given an opportunity, they will send this group packing.

Can you imagine having to go out there as a Liberal candidate in a general election and campaign on the slogan, "It's just a cup of coffee"? Is that going to be their campaign slogan for the \$1.1 billion that was wasted in Mississauga and Oakville? "It's just a cup of coffee." I think people will buy that. What do you think, Speaker? Will people actually accept that as a good reason for cancelling and relocating those gas plants? I want to see the Liberal members campaigning on that.

I looked across today, Speaker, at the faces on the Liberal members. They've all seen this. They've all seen—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Prop.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is not a prop; this is the auditor's report. It is absolutely legal to show this to the House. The Speaker knows that, and that's why he didn't stop me.

But I want to tell you this: I looked across. I looked across today with this report and I saw the greatest display of collective shame in my 10 years in this chamber. The heads were hung. It would have been a perfect opportunity for a photo op for the shame of the caucus. That's what we could call it: "The Shame of the Caucus," the Liberal caucus all assembled together behind their leader, Premier Wynne, heads hung in shame for their role in this report.

So do they want to talk about the auditor's report? No. Here's what they want to talk about. Here's what they want to say: lovely phrases like, "And recognizing the retirement savings challenge, the Ontario government has developed a comprehensive retirement income strategy and is leading the call for a CPP enhancement." Doesn't that sound nice? Doesn't that sound better than getting up and—how about another apology saying that after 10 years of absolutely wrecking the economy of this province with an attitude of complete ambivalence to everything else that was going around and all the good advice of the citizens of this province, now we have to put the hammer down? Oh, no. Let's not say that. The Liberals wouldn't want to say that. Let's say something like this.

So what did she go out and say when the economic statement came out in the fall? "We're going to increase spending." Every analyst and every economist in the world is telling them, "Whoa. You guys are so deep in the hole, you've got to stop digging." What does the Premier say? "We're going to increase spending." You know, "Let's just increase spending because I think that will fix everything, won't it?" Folks, that's not going to work.

I want you people over there—we'll deal with your silly motion that means nothing, that has no legislative teeth, authority, whatsoever. It's a wish list. But I guess this is the season of wishes. I hope yours come true, and I hope that the fairy godmother visits your house at Christmastime too. This is a wish list.

But let's stop wishing and let's roll up our sleeves and start facing the problems that the people of Ontario need us to face. Let's collectively—I'll use some nice words. Let's have a conversation and let's collectively and collaboratively come up with solutions that will matter to the people of Ontario, not any more of this airy-fairy language kind of stuff that everybody is tired of hearing. The Premier became the leader earlier this year. It all sounded good to start. But you know what? It's wearing out. People are getting tired of the fancy phrases. They're getting tired of living in fantasyland and the thinking that, "Oh, if we just smile at each other and have a big group hug, all our problems are going to go away." It's not going to happen. If you want to fix the problems, you've got to actually come up with concrete solutions that have been well thought out so that when they are implemented, it will show, the results will show, that we will have an economy that is rolling once again, the envy of all of Canada; in fact, the envy of the world.

It's not going to happen until we vote on this amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm happy to rise and talk a bit about this issue. I thought I was going to have 30 or 40 minutes, but my friend from Renfrew there used all of his time. So I'm going to turn my 10 minutes to talking about some people in my riding.

1750

But, you know, one has to question why this motion is being brought forward on the day after the Auditor General's report and the day before the Legislature is actually rising. It's kind of laughable that the government would actually bring forward a motion like this the day before we're rising until the middle of February. I think it's a pathetic attempt to change the scandal channel. That's my new buzz word: the scandal channel. I know and the Liberal government knows that this motion is going nowhere.

On December 9, the NDP federally tabled and debated a motion, and it was overwhelmingly defeated by the Conservative government. They have no interest in enhancing CPP pensions. They don't care, so it's going nowhere.

On the other hand, there is a proposal by this government for pooled registered retirement plans with, I think, a date to respond by January 14—not a defined benefit plan, not a plan where somebody can depend on \$600 or \$700 a month when they retire; a plan that will profit insurance companies and banks. They are just rubbing their hands and itching to get into these pooled registered retirement plans.

It's really concerning that the government could have been doing other things, like some oversight of OPG. Today during question period I had an opportunity to read some of the articles in the clippings, and it really turned my stomach. I felt sick reading some of those articles that people—the president is making \$1.7 million. Three people get fired; the one guy gets \$760,000 in bonuses for the last four years and then he gets fired, and he's still going to get severance pay. We all know that he's going to end up, probably, with two years' severance, so those guys will walk away with \$1 million, \$1.5 million each. But in my riding at my local food bank, The Hope Centre, an agency that provides services to the most vulnerable in our society—the Salvation Army—they can't provide Christmas baskets this year to all of the needy people in the Niagara south area of my riding because there are too many people in need. This year, baskets will only go out to families with children.

On this hand, you've got these guys basically raping the public system for dollars, and over here we have people like the member from Renfrew talked about who are in so much trouble they don't know whether to pay their rent or buy groceries, and that's sad.

I had a woman call today, actually, after she read the newspaper in our area, about the OPG salaries. Her name is Norma Heximer, and her daughter is a nurse; I worked with her at the local hospital for a number of years.

She said, "Isn't there something that we can do about these outrageous CEO salaries?" On the one hand, these

people are making all this money, but here's a senior—she needs a hearing aid—and the Assistive Devices Program under the province pays \$500.

Do you know how much a hearing aid costs? Upwards of \$4,000 or \$5,000 today to buy a decent hearing aid. Here's a senior struggling, who needs one, and she's going to get \$500 from the government to assist her, while over here we're not paying any attention to CEOs and VPs of Hydro One or OPG making millions and millions of dollars and making it, actually, on the backs of those people who are paying the freight: the taxpayers of this province.

I had another fellow actually send me an email. His name is Roy Norgrove. He was a Torontonion. He was a successful self-employed photographer until he had a quadruple bypass, and he's now living on CPP and old age security. He moved from Toronto to Port Colborne. He went through all of his savings because he had to use it as income; he could no longer work. His blood circulation is reduced, so it's important for him to keep warm. But guess what? The temperature in his house today is at 62 degrees because his apartment is heated with hydro and he can't turn the temperature up. He's afraid to turn it on. His average bill is \$150 a month, soon to be \$200 a month under the new long-term energy plan. He's beside himself because of the recently announced hydro hikes. He called the energy board to complain and they said, "Nothing we can do about it." They suggested he write a letter. He's articulate and angry, on one hand, about the obscene salaries and bonuses being given out by Hydro One, OPG and their predecessors and, on the other hand, that there's nothing but very high delivery fees, debt retirement charges and peak hour energy prices that effectively punish retirees on fixed incomes. Of course, we still haven't seen what it's going to cost for the cancelled gas plants to save a few Liberals seats.

He calls the folks making money for electricity in Ontario "ruthless thieves"—his words, not mine. He believes there should be a forensic audit ordered of the Ontario Energy Board. He said he'd be happy to speak with any of us on this issue. Those are the kinds of struggles that people are facing in my riding.

I heard from a senior, 67 years old. She's still waitressing, slugging around those heavy trays because she doesn't have enough income. She's collecting CPP. She's still being required to pay CPP because nobody told her that she had to actually sign off so that she didn't have to contribute any longer—not that the few dollars of contributions are going to help her down the road.

So in my hard-hit riding, where we've lost probably 10,000 jobs in the last 10 years, I've got seniors who retired from the private sector. They retired with a pension that they thought they were going to have for the rest of their lives, only to find out that those pension plans were underfunded—governments don't seem to be

too concerned about ensuring that private companies are actually fully funding pension plans—and I've got retirees who are 70 years old and 80 years old who are now finding their pension reduced by 30% and 40%, along with their benefits. I've got GM retirees who have retired—middle-management folks who were in my office last week. They've got a class action suit going against GM because their pensions are about to be reduced because GM, who makes huge profits, didn't fully fund their pension plans and so now they're in trouble.

Is enhanced CPP a good thing? Yes, it is a good thing, but the fact is, it's not going to happen with this motion; it's very problematic. I don't think this Liberal government knows from one year to the next what they are actually doing because if I remember correctly, Dwight Duncan, the former finance minister, had some kind of a pension plan when he was here. In that plan, he was going to actually take money from—

Ms. Catherine Fife: You remember Dwight.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You remember Dwight. He was going to take money from two of the biggest public sector pension plans, and he was going to use it to try and fund the underperforming or underfunded smaller pension plans, right? Now we're moving to this new plan for these pooled registered retirement funds that are not going to provide people with the income they need at the end of the day.

I guess my time is almost up here. I would say that—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, he'll stand up. Keep on going.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Okay. I would say that this is nothing more than a way to change the channel, hoping that people over the Christmas and New Year's break actually forget about the Auditor General's report, forget about the gas plant cancellations and the millions of dollars, forget about all those people who are effectively stealing money from the public utility.

I think the Liberals should be paying more attention to things like Chris Mazza who actually got \$9.3 million over a four-year period and he's now looking for \$1 million in severance pay. What is that about, right? Those are the kinds of things that the Liberal government should be concerned about: the Chris Mazzas of the world, the OPG scandal, autism—we talked about autism today, actually. Today we had a question; I think there were several questions on it over the last few days. We've got more people on the waiting lists than there are kids actually getting the services provided, and the government isn't doing anything about that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
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Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
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Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
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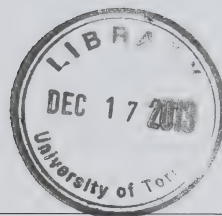
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of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 12 December 2013

Jeudi 12 décembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker. I believe that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I move that the orders for second and third readings of the following private bills shall be called consecutively, and that the questions on the motions for second and third readings of the bills be put immediately without debate. They are bills Pr15, Pr18, Pr19, Pr20, Pr21 and Pr24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General has put forward his motion on the private bills. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL AGROLOGISTS ACT, 2013

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act respecting the Ontario Institute of Professional Agrologists.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Second reading agreed to.

ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL AGROLOGISTS ACT, 2013

Mr. Hardeman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr15, An Act respecting the Ontario Institute of Professional Agrologists.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

KINGSGATE II LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive Kingsgate II Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Agreed.

Second reading agreed to.

KINGSGATE II LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive Kingsgate II Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

KINGSGATE III LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr19, An Act to revive Kingsgate III Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Second reading agreed to.

KINGSGATE III LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr19, An Act to revive Kingsgate III Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

KINGSGATE IV LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr20, An Act to revive Kingsgate IV Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Second reading agreed to.

KINGSGATE IV LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr20, An Act to revive Kingsgate IV Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree?
Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

WESTMOUNT RIDGE ASSOCIATES LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act to revive Westmount Ridge Associates Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree?
Agreed.

Second reading agreed to.

WESTMOUNT RIDGE ASSOCIATES LIMITED ACT, 2013

Ms. Armstrong moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr21, An Act to revive Westmount Ridge Associates Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree?
Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

SENCURA HOLDINGS LTD. ACT, 2013

Mr. Prue moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr24, An Act to revive Senchura Holdings Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree?
Agreed.

Second reading agreed to.

SENCURA HOLDINGS LTD. ACT, 2013

Mr. Prue moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr24, An Act to revive Senchura Holdings Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree?
Agreed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Terry Kingsmill, registrar of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists. He came to Queen's Park this morning to join us here for the passing of second and third readings of the Ontario Institute of Professional Agrologists Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guest here. All legislation is done this way.
Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's amazing what we can do when we all work together

in this House. We passed six bills there just on a moment's notice.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 11, 2013, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am very pleased to have this opportunity this morning to speak on behalf of my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills and speak to third reading of Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. Of course, as we know, this bill was introduced at first reading in this Legislature on September 24, this fall, and has been making its way through the legislative process.

I want to begin, first of all, Mr. Speaker, by wishing you and your family a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. This may very well be the last day that the Ontario Legislature sits in the fall sitting and may even be the last day of this Parliament. We will see. Certainly, the government has many challenges that it is facing, and when we resume sitting, perhaps in the spring, we will continue this discussion.

It is also possible, I suppose, that the government might prorogue the House after the House rises, and then we'll be into an election campaign—perhaps. I'm not making any predictions. But certainly we're all looking forward to what may come in the new year and the opportunity to go back to the people and seek their advice as to what provincial initiatives should be supported and endorsed.

0910

But, of course, we're debating Bill 105, and I certainly want to focus my remarks on small business issues, because that is such an important part of our economy. This bill, as you know, Mr. Speaker, amends the Employer Health Tax Act by increasing the exemption amount from \$400,000 of payroll to \$450,000 of payroll, effective in 2014 if the bill passes, and imposes a \$5-million payroll threshold and provides special rules for registered charities.

Our caucus has been participating in this debate. We've been saying that this legislation exemplifies exactly what is wrong with this government and their approach to governing. They are unwilling to go far enough to take the decisive action that is needed to provide real tax relief to Ontario's businesses. This is more tinkering around the edges by the government and will not do enough to solve

the jobs crisis facing the province. We're saying that this legislation comes at a time when we're struggling with skyrocketing hydro rates; increases to WSIB premiums; the College of Trades tax, as we call it; outdated apprenticeship ratios; and the forest of red tape and regulations that strangle the ability of Ontario businesses to prosper. Only the PC caucus has a real plan to free businesses from the tax and regulatory burden that this government has placed upon them, so they can invest and create the jobs that Ontarians need and deserve.

In my riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, small business is the backbone of our local economy, along with agriculture. I've always sought the advice of small business people in terms of my responsibilities as their member of provincial Parliament—I'm privileged to serve them. In fact, I come from a small business background. My family was in the heavy construction business—still is, actually. Arnott Construction, based in Arthur for many, many years, moved to Collingwood in 1974 and is now based in Midhurst, Ontario. They do a lot of work in the Simcoe county area and Grey county, as well as Dufferin county.

The fact is, my grandfather started the business in 1929, when he was just 21 years of age, and through three generations of our family, the Arnotts have been in the construction business. I worked for many summers as a labourer when I was teenager, when I was in university, in the construction business as a hard-working labourer. I worked 10 hours a day and it was tough work. But I certainly wanted to earn the respect of the men I worked with, and as well, I wanted the reports going back to my dad to be good ones, so I worked very, very hard. But it was obviously an interesting experience. My dad wanted me to go into the construction business, in fact, and encouraged me to do that, and I ended up here. So I don't know what that means.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Building a better province.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yes, I hope I'm working to build a better province, and I appreciate that very much.

When I was first elected in the early 1990s, when Bob Rae was Premier and the NDP was in power, I went to Mike Harris, who at the time was leader of the third party, and suggested to him that our party needed a small business advocate. With all the heavy taxes, new regulations and red tape the NDP government was bringing forward, and the fact that the NDP government didn't seem to understand that small business was such an important part of our economy and an engine of job creation—that was the case in those days—our party needed a small business advocate. He, in fact, appointed me to that position, and I was pleased to do it.

In 1994, we released a report within our caucus, called Supporting Small Business, Creating New Jobs. It was actually released a few months before the Common Sense Revolution document itself was released in 1994. In fact, many of the recommendations we brought forward as part of our small business task force found their way into the Common Sense Revolution, and of course, when we formed the government in 1995, we began to

implement those items. Over the course of our time in office, there were about a million new jobs created in the province of Ontario, and we're very proud of that aspect of our record.

During our time in government, I was privileged to serve as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, with specific responsibilities for small business, and I came to know Judith Andrew very well, who at the time was the provincial director for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I was really impressed with their organization and the way they represent their members. They do a super job of polling their members and getting their feedback, and then bringing those concerns forward. I believe they're highly respected by governments of all stripes—should be highly respected and should be listened to.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have now been in government for about 10 years, and we see the Liberal legacy as being one of increasing the debt. The provincial debt has doubled in the 10 years they've been in office. It now stands, I believe, at \$273 billion, twice what it was just 10 years ago.

We know that hydro rates have skyrocketed. Of course, we've seen just this week the Auditor General's report, which looked into the compensation practices of the Ontario Power Generation company and found a culture of excess. In fact, the Auditor General tied that back to the increase, the upward pressure on hydro rates. We also know that the government's Green Energy Act has added billions of dollars to the overall hydro bills in the province of Ontario, as well as the cynical decisions to cancel the gas plants, which cost the hydro ratepayers, as well as the taxpayers, \$1.1 billion.

Mr. Speaker, \$1.1 billion would go a long way to satisfying the infrastructure needs of my riding in Wellington-Halton Hills. It would easily pay for the new Highway 7 between Guelph and Kitchener that we need. It would pay for the Highway 6 Morriston bypass that we need south of Guelph, south of the 401, going down to Hamilton. It would pay for a new Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus that we've been approved for but have yet to see the full funding from the provincial government. And it would pay for a new Holy Cross Catholic school in Georgetown—just a few examples.

I see the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation coming into the House, and I'm pleased to see him. I had a brief opportunity to discuss some of the transportation and infrastructure needs in my riding yesterday morning when we ran into each other walking over here on College Street.

I had the chance also this week to write a number of emails to the Minister of Rural Affairs in support of the municipalities in my riding that have put forward applications under the rural, northern and small town infrastructure program, and we have made our case and we have needs that need to be addressed.

When the new Premier took office, I heard her on CBC radio being interviewed. She said her three priorities were: social justice, mending fences with the teach-

ers' federations and transit. We see that continuing to be amongst the highest priorities of the provincial government. Of course, from our perspective as a PC caucus, we would suggest that the priorities need to be: reducing the deficit as quickly as possible so we can start paying down the debt; an encouragement and focus on job creation; and a prioritization of government spending so that we're spending on the most important needs, such as health care, education, protection of our environment, community safety—but determining what those most important and urgent priorities need to be and eliminating the wasteful spending. The Auditor General's report gives us a guideline in that respect; as well, the Drummond report gives us lots of recommendations as to how we can reduce government spending and still focus on the urgent priorities of Ontarians.

Youth unemployment is a huge issue in my riding, and I would suggest and maintain that I don't see how Bill 105 will do very much to address that problem. We have seen in the province of Ontario 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost just in recent years. Most recently, the Heinz plant in Leamington that, for years, has been a mainstay of that community announced it would be closing, with the loss of hundreds of jobs. Kellogg's in London, just this week: again, hundreds of jobs lost. In my own riding of Wellington—Halton Hills and in the community of Fergus where I now live and call my home, in the A.O. Smith plant—formerly GSW, formerly Beattie Brothers—350 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost as a result of a number of factors, but really, the overall competitiveness of the Ontario economy was the main factor that they articulated. I would suggest that the provincial government has negatively impacted, with many of its decisions, on our overall competitiveness.

Yesterday, Tim Hudak spoke at the Economic Club. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to go to that speech because I was doing another event for him in the Queen's Park precinct, speaking to public servants. But I read his speech this morning, and he said that Ontario is at a tipping point and we must take a new direction.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up. I certainly agree with that statement. I appreciate the opportunity to respond further to members' questions and comments when I get the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand in this House, especially so close to Christmas, and comment on the remarks of the member from Wellington—Halton Hills. I listened closely to his remarks, and he brought up a lot of issues, a lot of very important issues. He didn't dwell a lot on the bill we're actually talking about, but he did bring up some very important issues.

The one about bringing down the deficit, that's an issue that we agree with. I think we all have to work on bringing down the deficit.

0920

It's interesting: When we first brought forward the proposal that is the basis for Bill 105, that was one of our goals, to show there are ways that the government could actually change the tax system to bring down the deficit, albeit in a very small way. We understand that. It was very small, but it showed direction, how a government could take measures that were accountable and sustainable and change the tax structure so that, yes, you would still give small businesses a break on the EHT, which they need, but a large business—I think our example was the Royal Bank—didn't really need that first \$400,000. By doing that, you would switch the needs and you would actually use that money to start paying down the deficit in the right direction.

It's interesting that the party to the right brought amendments forward, which weren't approved in Bill 105, that actually would increase the deficit. So it's interesting that they talk about decreasing the deficit, but they bring amendments forward that increase the deficit. That's a problem, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I too want to take an opportunity to respond to the member from Wellington, whom I respect greatly in this House. I've worked with him over the last 18 years here. I too am from a background of four generations of independent business individuals. I was an independent business person as a lawyer; my father was, my grandfather and his father before that, although they were in the old country mainly—my grandparents. I just want to take this opportunity to wish him, his colleagues, everyone in the House, everyone in Ontario, season's greetings, merry Christmas and a happy and, most of all, a healthy new year for each and every one.

Now, getting back to this bill, what I do not understand is that everybody, particularly the Tory party, is all about tax cuts. That's all I've ever heard here in the last 18 years. This bill speaks to cutting the taxes of smaller companies, and the member from Oxford knows that. He and I have known each other a long, long time, well before we came here. This bill is a tax-cutting bill for small business, and they need that. Everybody in the House agrees on that.

We've spent 20 hours debating this bill, and I'm all in favour of a democratic process to allow everybody to speak as long as they possibly can. But the reality is this, Speaker: If this bill does not get third reading today, then the small businesses in Ontario will not be able to benefit from it, because this bill is intended to go into effect—the tax cuts that are contained herein—on January 1. That's the reality of the situation.

Now, I know we like to play all sorts of little games in here, and all parties are part of that from time to time, but in this particular case, this bill has had 20 hours of debate. It needs to be passed today in order for the small businesses, and particularly the people who run those small businesses, and the people of Ontario to benefit

from it. So let's get on with it. Let's give this bill third reading so it can go into effect on January 1.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, like other members, I'd like to first of all recognize the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, speaking on Bill 105, but take the time to extend season's greetings and a merry Christmas to all, including you, Speaker, and all members and all my constituents and the people of Ontario.

That being said, I don't like to switch so quickly to a very sour note, but on Bill 105, this bill has—I participated in the debate on three different occasions. This is third reading, and the government is holding this up for various reasons, trying to find agreement among the House leaders. It went to committee, it spent time in committee, time in this House—not one amendment. I went down to the table. I was so surprised that after going to committee and all the debate that suggested—we moved eight amendments; they never adopted a single one. In fact, I don't think they even listened.

If I look at the real report of what's going on—this is an article that's in the paper, so I'm not making this up. This is from one of the local papers here in Toronto. It says, "The Stolen Decade." It's sort of like the wish list for Christmas. It says, "We will balance the budget"—not. "We will fund medically necessary health care services"—not. "We will cap hydro rates at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour...." I'm not making this up. These are promises made. It's like Santa promising and then not delivering. "We will cap tolls on Highway 407"—how absurd. "We will stop school closings." I've got the Cartwright school. The list goes on. This is like the wish list for Santa. "We will make sure health dollars are spent wisely." You can't get access to drugs even if you're dying. "We will reduce private consultants." They've just gone scandalous in the report of the auditor yesterday. "We will govern with honesty and integrity." My goodness on the eve of a Christmas season and the goodwill that should be extended, don't let them fool you. This government can't be trusted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I listened to everyone's comments here. I think the bill finds some consensus in terms of its support, although folks have different opinions in terms of how effective it may be. Of course, my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane pointed out that the intent of the bill was really a New Democratic idea. We proposed it. We sent it over to the government. They made some changes that really reduced the effectiveness of it in terms of what it could have done to reduce our deficit, so it negates the double net benefit that the bill could have had.

Nevertheless, we do believe that it certainly will help our small businesses in the province of Ontario, one of which, I'm proud to say, my wife runs in our wonderful community of LaSalle, a small business that has been in operation for 83 years. That's enormous. It's a wonderful

history of supporting her community. They have employees there. They certainly will benefit from this.

But what they do need, in fact, is some consumer confidence infused into our economy, one that shows that the government understands that there's a growing disparity between wages and the wage and income gap where people actually feel confident enough in their employment to make those purchases, whether they be small or large. That's something that I don't think has been addressed in any large part in this House.

But one thing I would add to the debate is that we're heading into the holiday season. I too want to extend season's greetings. Merry Christmas to all Ontarians. But let's remember to do the thing that can support small business the most: When you're out buying gifts, don't buy them at Walmart. Don't buy them at the big box stores. Buy local; shop local. Go into your small towns on the main street and buy some knick-knacks that are made in Canada even. Try to find one of those these days. I certainly will be doing that, and I encourage all the other members to do the same thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington-Halton Hills, you have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We were just talking about the small business issues here amongst my colleagues, and I think each of us in our caucus probably could go on for 90 minutes to two hours easily to talk about the small business issues in our ridings. I only have now a minute and 46 seconds, but I certainly want to acknowledge the comments of the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, the Attorney General, the member for Durham and the member for Essex, all of whom have participated in debates in this Legislature of course very actively over the last few months and, in some cases, years. I thank them for their comments.

To the Attorney General, I want to say I really do appreciate his comments and also the fact that he's going to be retiring from this place. He has been an outstanding member, I can now say that with a smile, for the last 18 years. I've enjoyed working with him. In fact, when our party went into opposition, he was moving out of room 420, and I was moving in. I've been there for the last 10 years, looking after your office and trying to keep it nice and tidy.

But the fact is that this is an important issue—getting back to Bill 105. I wanted to talk a bit about the history of it, too, of course. I can remember, going back to the 1980s, when the David Peterson government promised to eliminate the OHIP premiums with great fanfare during the elections, I think, in 1985 and 1987. What they didn't tell us was they were going to replace it with the employer health tax. That's of course what they did to replace the revenue. The employer health tax in and of itself is a payroll tax. As we know, payroll taxes are the ones that inhibit job creation because they're a disincentive for employers to hire people. In our time in government, we created the threshold for the first \$400,000 of payroll to try and eliminate that disincentive for small

business. During the course of the committee deliberations and discussions on Bill 105, we actually brought forward an amendment to increase the threshold to \$800,000. Unfortunately, the government voted that down. I believe the New Democrats did not support it either, or it would have passed.

So we continue to monitor this issue. We're trying to do our part in the public interest to support job creation, and we look forward to that in the future.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to be able to stand today and speak on Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. As we know, this amends the Employer Health Tax Act by increasing the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000, effective in 2014. It imposes a \$5-million payroll threshold, which could be a problem. It provides special rules for registered charities.

This is something I know a little bit about. My family has been in small business for over four generations, starting, in the early days, selling tractors in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, in the 1920s and eventually, after the dust bowl, moving to Ontario and moving into the car business, selling Studebakers, right up to Toyotas today.

It is interesting, though, to see how a business grows. I've had the opportunity to start and grow my own small business before I had the privilege of taking this seat in this House, and I've got an idea of what it takes to grow a business and to employ people, and the challenges that are attached with that. In fact, I remember distinctly, as a child, coming home one day and my house was for sale, because my dad had to sell it to be able to make payroll.

If you talk to a lot of business people—and I do. Every summer, whenever I'm home, I make sure I go and talk to all the business people in Barrie and find out the challenges they see that prevent them—the question I was asking was, “What prevents you from hiring more people? What prevents you from growing to the size you want to be and employing the number of people and creating the amount of profits you want to have, so that you can afford to hire more people?”

The number one thing they tell me about is the regulatory burdens that they have, the payroll taxes that they have, and just the plethora of red tape that they encounter on a day-to-day basis. A lot of them simply don't have the resources to be able to deal with these in an efficient manner. The owners of these businesses end up doing it themselves in many cases, especially small businesses. Frankly, they should be focused on doing what they do best, which is employing people and creating jobs in our communities.

It is important, I think, in the context of this bill, to remember exactly what the engine that drives our economy is. The engine that drives our economy is small business. It's a shame, when we talk about the major employers like Heinz and Caterpillar, and any number of them in Barrie—I could say Molson's, Faurecia, Black

and Decker, and General Tire—that have all left and gutted our manufacturing economy in my own town.

The fact of the matter is, the majority of people in Ontario are employed by businesses with four or less employees. That's an incredible statement to make. We focus a lot here in this place, and as politicians in general at every level, and certainly even media talk about—these big business losses get a lot of attention, and so they should. It's very sad that our manufacturing sector is getting gutted the way it is because of the high hydro costs, because of the high payroll taxes and because of some of the bad practices of this government over the past 10 years. But the fact remains that we need to be able to support those that employ the most people in Ontario, which is small business.

Even though this bill talks about a \$5-million threshold for payroll tax—it sounds like a lot. It is a lot: \$5 million. Let's not kid anyone: \$5 million is a lot. The fact is, though, a lot of these small businesses, family-owned businesses, meet that threshold very quickly. When you have between 30 and 60 well-paid employees working for you, you're going to meet that threshold very, very fast. This bill doesn't help them. This bill puts them in a difficult position.

What we've been saying about this bill from the very beginning is that it just doesn't go far enough. In fact, I would say it's well-intentioned, and there are some good things in there. The problem is, it doesn't go far enough. It doesn't do enough to be able to help those businesses, like I said, do what they do best, which is employ people and grow.

I don't think anyone gets into small business to remain the same size. I don't think anyone gets into small business to employ one or two people or just themselves. They get into it because they want to be active in their communities. They get into it because they want to provide jobs for people in their communities. They get into it because they want to be profitable. If we nickel-and-dime them at every turn and make it more difficult for them to do business, like this bill does—in this case, it actually—employers told us what they needed.

They were flat out ignored by the Liberals and the NDP when it came to the amendments—and they voted against our \$800,000 amendment. Our amendment was to increase the employer health tax exemption to \$800,000, which was called for by the CFIB, and it would have saved small businesses thousands of dollars annually. This could be the difference between them hiring another person or not.

This new legislation means that businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption on the first \$400,000 of their payroll, increasing taxes on family-owned businesses like Canadian Tire—which, in many cases, is a small, family-owned business, by the definition—the independent grocer, for example, or the local car dealer, by thousands of dollars. Why the two other parties voted against our amendments to eliminate this \$5-million cap is really quite confusing.

I think what we're doing here with this cap isn't trying to stymie the bill as much as we are trying to create jobs. We're trying to open the door to let these small businesses, which employ the majority of people in Ontario, grow and employ more people. When we employ more people, we put more money into our economy, have more people paying taxes; we grow.

So I'm not quite sure what the resistance is to this amendment. I think it probably should have been a fairly innocuous one, really. I don't know if it's stubbornness or some other games that are being played along the way, but it certainly is frustrating to see at a time when these small businesses, like I said before, that employ the majority of the people in our economy, need the help. They're already getting nickel-and-dimed to death on their hydro rates; they're getting nickel-and-dimed to death on development charges from municipalities. They're getting nickel-and-dimed on—you name it. You turn every single corner, whether it's WSIB or employer taxation, we already have the most payroll taxes in Canada: \$9,970. That source, by the way, if anyone wants to know, is the Toronto Star.

We know that we're not being competitive. We have to remember that in Ontario we're not just competing with the other provinces—and by the way, we're at the bottom of the pile. We're competing with the United States. We're competing with all those—let's just start with the border states. Let's start with New York, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana, and let's talk about all those states that have made some pretty dramatic changes to their taxation structure, to their labour laws, to any number—you pick it—because they realize they need to be competitive and mobile. They need to change. We need to change the way we do business in Ontario or we're not going to be able to catch up with them. They're running away with this, not to mention our foreign competitors.

We're in a global economy now. We need to be able to compete—small businesses, even. I've talked to a number of small businesses, and I'll give you one example: Moore Packaging in Barrie, who gave me an opportunity to cut my teeth working for them as a young man—not that I'm still not young. But they gave me my first opportunity to work with them as a human resources manager early on—a company that employs 300 to 400 people. All of a sudden, it went from being a local business that was importing packaging products across Ontario, and in fact Canada, to now competing with companies from China, because they can import and develop these products faster, with less red tape, and get them to the Toronto market as fast or even faster than Moore can, because Moore hasn't been able to make the capital investments that would allow them to get their products to Toronto—90 kilometres down the road—as fast as it takes their competitors from China to get it from overseas.

This is the kind of competition that we need to be able to get our feet into. We need to be able to provide our businesses in Ontario with the ability to be able to fight back, be competitive, provide a quality product, employ

more people, and get more people to work in high-paying jobs in Ontario. This bill limits their ability to be able to do that, and frankly it's very, very disappointing.

This bill, in fact, is another window-dressing bill. Like I said, I think it's well-intended and it has potential to actually be a very productive bill, but it has a minuscule benefit for Ontario businesses in the overall framework, which is a shame. We need to do more than window dressing at this point. We need to do more than just make the point that, “Yes, we care, and to show you we care, we're going to create this bill.” We need to actually do something of substance in here and help these businesses get off the ground, get off their knees, in many cases.

0940

Liberal policies have tripled hydro rates in the past decade, increased taxes through WSIB, the College of Trades fees, among others, and dramatically increased the red tape regulatory burden on businesses. I know that local businesses I've talked to want to make some expansions, and they won't do it because they know the regulatory burdens that will get put on them, the development charges that will get put on them—that's a municipal thing—but still the amount of charges that will get placed on them will prevent them, in this case, from hiring 60 more people. They're going to go down the road, probably to the States, to do that. This bill doesn't help those people. It doesn't help jobs in Ontario, and we need to make some amendments to make it work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: 'Tis the season to be jolly. I also want to wish everybody here a merry Christmas and a happy new year. Everybody, I hope you're going to be safe and enjoy your holidays, and all of the people in Algoma-Manitoulin, I'm looking forward to coming to the various suppers. As you can see, I love the food that you cook for me back in Algoma-Manitoulin, and I certainly enjoy being invited to your tables.

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Quelques mots en français.

M. Michael Mantha: Pardon?

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Quelques mots en français.

M. Michael Mantha: Je veux dire un mot de l'apport de mon ami et mon collègue le ministre des Transports, qui est ici. On a résolu un petit peu des problèmes qu'on a dans Algoma-Manitoulin. Ça fait que j'apporte des bonnes nouvelles avec moi quand on retourne à la circonscription d'Algoma-Manitoulin.

Je veux souhaiter une bonne, heureuse année et puis un joyeux Noël à toutes les familles et puis à mes collègues ici à Queen's Park.

Là, il faut vraiment que je parle au sujet du projet de loi.

I agree with the member where he says, “You know, this bill doesn't exactly go far enough.” There are other measures that we can certainly be helping not only small business, but Ontarians as a whole by looking—it's great to see that the exemption on the \$400,000 is going to be increased to \$450,000 and is going to mean something for small businesses. But for the larger ones, who actual-

ly don't need this cut, we should be looking at keeping that revenue so that we can service Ontarians and provide those much-needed revenue dollars for this province.

We should also look at closing the corporate tax loopholes that are going to be implemented through the HST input tax. That is something new that is going to be created that we can actually save dollars and keep those dollars in the pockets. But if we want to really help small business, why don't we look at the cuts that have happened through the kiosks through ServiceOntario? That is having a huge economic impact on small businesses across northern Ontario and across this province because people are continuously dealing with licensing issues and not having service or access to their ServiceOntario counters. If we're going to be really sincere about helping Ontarians and small business, let's look at the root cause of what's causing those problems.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. First of all, to you and through you to all the members, merry Christmas and happy new year. It's a great privilege to serve in this Legislature on behalf of the great community of Ottawa Centre, and I'm very much looking forward to continue the service in the new year. I wish everyone and their families a very merry Christmas and a very prosperous new year to come.

It's a great opportunity to speak about Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act. By the way, this bill has now gone through about 22 hours of debate. I think we've heard all the points of view a few times over, and it's time that we pass this bill so that our businesses can benefit from it in the new year.

Yesterday, when I spoke on this bill, I posed—because this is questions and comments, so I posed questions—a few questions to the member from Kitchener—Conestoga. I'll repeat those questions now to the member from Barrie, because I didn't even get an acknowledgement of my questions in the response—forget any answers.

So here are my questions: I just want to know, how did the PC Party vote when our government reduced the corporate income tax rate from 14% to 11.5%? How did the PC Party vote when we reduced the corporate income tax for the manufacturing and resource sector from 12% to 10%? How did the PC Party vote when we reduced the corporate income tax rate for small businesses from 5.5% to 4.5%? How did the PC Party vote when we reduced the small business deduction surtax from 4.25% to zero? And how did the PC Party vote when we completely eliminated the capital tax that businesses paid whether they made money or not? We brought it down to absolutely zero. How did the PC Party vote? Speaker, the answer is that they voted against every single one of these measures. Despite the fact that they talk about that they support businesses, they voted against it. So my question is, why did you vote against it?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It is my duty as the whip here today to listen to the remarks being made, and I want to commend the member from Barrie for his insightful comments, because he comes from a family of business; he comes from an HR background. He understands many of the concerns that Bill 105 simply does not address. In purest terms, it is actually an increase in tax on fairly middle-to-larger-sized businesses. They're giving a reduction in the employer health tax for under \$450,000 in payroll, and once you get to \$5 million, you don't get any. In fact, you don't get any exemption either.

So the member from Barrie—and also, the Minister of Labour said something that was actually inaccurate. What he said was, the Liberals promised, prior to the last election, to reduce corporate tax rates, and then they reversed themselves on that. That's the true story, and that's why we voted against it, primarily.

In fact, I'm going to go through the clippings this morning. This is not political. These are the comments this morning. The first 10 pages are summarized in a scandalous sort of way: "Wynne Vows Law to Control Execs' Pay" at OPG; "OPG's Corporate Culture Needs Lesson in Thrift." The first 10 pages are all about the Auditor General's comments on Ontario Power Generation's inordinate and extremely exaggerated pays.

It goes on to say, "Ontario Drops Local Content Rules for" the Green Energy Act. That's when they said the Green Energy Act was going to create jobs. Now they've reversed themselves on that as well, because they were not in compliance with the World Trade Organization—another backdown.

"Face It, the Ontario Liberals are Worse Than Rob Ford." I'm not making these—"Matthews Confirms Mazza's Salary" was \$9.3 million—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to tell me how it relates to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's \$9,300,000.

Bill 105 is one example. It's a payroll issue, to some extent. I understand that, but here's the issue. The real issue is, "Ontario Drops Local Content ... for Green Energy." "How Long Does Ontario Need to Turn Around a Bloated Utility?" "Face It, the Ontario Liberals are Worse Than Rob Ford." Health minister makes \$9.3 million—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Mr. John O'Toole: The list goes on. Can I have more time to read into the record—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to speak to G105.

I want to tell you about some people in my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh. Tom and Susie LiCausi used to run Forest Glade hardware in my subdivision, and then Walmart moved in. So they got out of the hardware business because it was tough to compete. They went around the corner to a better location—more visible—and they opened up a fireplace store. That was seasonal, so they

got into the patio business. They're doing very well, but they're working very hard. These are small business people who are working six days a week and doing some inventory on Sunday. They're selling equipment that's made in Canada, and made in Canada matters as opposed to the lesser-quality furniture you may buy at a Walmart. One of their children, John, is going to take over the business and run that for them down the road. That will give nonna more time to spend with her grandchildren.

To the Minister of Labour who thought we'd spoken enough on this, if I could quote Walter Lippmann from 1939. He said, "The opposition is indispensable. A good statesman, like any ... sensible human being, always learns more from his opponents than from his fervent supporters." One other quote: Harry S. Truman, in 1950, said, "Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear." I don't think here in Ontario that's what we want, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Barrie, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to thank the members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of Labour and certainly the member from Durham for their comments.

Actually, I really enjoyed the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's comments. I fully concur that nothing grates on me more in this House when we're told we've had enough debate. There's nothing to see here; move along.

You know what? I haven't had an opportunity to speak to this bill yet, and I was really happy to have the opportunity to be able to speak to it and share the thoughts and concerns of my constituents and myself on this bill. The ability to do so is a right and privilege that I have after I was elected. So I think everybody in this House, if they want to, should have the opportunity to speak to any bill, and any accusation that we've spoken enough to it really is kind of shameful.

0950

We need to be able to express our rights and privileges in this place, especially when it comes to one of the biggest issues of the day, which is creating jobs in Ontario, and this is a place where this government has come up woefully short. We've seen some half measures, a tipping of the hat at the problem, a recognition of the problem of creating more jobs in Ontario, but really, when it comes down to it, nothing of substance to really help people out.

It's not even a matter of not spending any more money, as was mentioned maybe earlier in this debate—you know, increasing the deficit and all this. You know what? There's a difference between nickel-and-diming and paying attention to the pennies and losing track of the dollars, which is exactly what this government has done. They've lost track of the dollars here. It's a matter of investing your dollars wisely so that you get more out

of it than you put into it. This government has failed on that attempt woefully.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I rise today to speak to government Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. As many of my colleagues have pointed out during earlier debate, Bill 105 is a small bill, and as some of my colleagues have also suggested, it is also, sadly, typical of this government's larger approach.

The party opposite has held power for 10 years, yet it is unwilling to take the strong and decisive action that is needed to address the problem this province faces and provide real tax relief for Ontario businesses. Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average for almost seven straight years—over half a million of our neighbours here in Ontario are out of work—yet the government still won't produce a credible jobs plan, and it refuses to adopt ideas put forward by Ontario PCs.

The measures contained within Bill 105 will not make any real impact on the jobs crisis that grips this province. This bill will not offer hope to the more than half a million men and women who woke up this morning without a job or get them back to work and to being happy, productive citizens of this province. In fact, even after the thoughtful second reading debate, the government actually shied away from taking a more ambitious position at committee.

We should be used to this government's long history of letdowns by now, but it is still disappointing to see the input of small businesses cherry-picked or ignored by the party opposite. It is also one more sign that this government is happy to make do with the appearance of caring about businesses.

Bill 105 amends the Employer Health Tax Act by increasing the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for the 2014-to-2018 period, adjusted for inflation thereafter. It also imposes a \$5-million payroll exemption threshold and establishes some special rules for registered charities and possibly special rules for employers associated with a registered charity.

That's the government's thumbnail version. The reality is that Ontario's smallest businesses will experience a small benefit while those with the largest payrolls will pay more, as long as they will no longer be entitled to the exemption—a tax break for the little guy, but a very modest one, and the most lightweight of tax-relief measures for a sector facing crushing payroll taxes, the highest payroll taxes in the country. On average, Ontario residents pay \$9,970 in payroll taxes. Estimates are that Bill 105 will offer some—not all—small businesses a payroll tax savings of around \$900 annually.

In fact, many family-owned businesses will actually be paying higher taxes after the Liberals and NDP teamed up to defeat Progressive Conservative amendments to Bill 105 when it was at committee. During clause-by-clause consideration, the Ontario PCs introduced an amendment to increase the employer health tax exemption to \$800,000. This echoed a call from the Canadian Feder-

ation of Independent Business, or CFIB, on behalf of 42,000 small- and medium-sized businesses across Ontario. That move would have saved those businesses thousands of dollars annually.

Ontario employers told us what they needed in terms of relief and support. In their submissions to the committee, the CFIB wrote that, "Our members consistently identify payroll taxes as the most difficult form of taxation to cope with because of their profit-insensitive nature, which limits their ability to grow their businesses and to create jobs." Again, Speaker, payroll taxes limit small and medium-sized businesses' ability to grow their operations and create jobs.

The CFIB's concerns were ignored by the government and their partners in the third party, who both voted against our \$800,000 amendment to Bill 105. Here's why that number is important. The lower exemption threshold favoured by the Liberals and the NDP has the potential to actually constrict business growth. If your business has a payroll of up to a \$450,000 level, you enjoy Bill 105's promised OHIP exemption. If your business grows beyond that point, however, you're no longer eligible. In that respect, it is a disincentive to grow once you close in on that mark, or it might be an incentive to shrink. If you're close to the line, you might scale back your payroll. Setting the bar low with Bill 105 seems to reflect the government's aspirations for this economy. But if government is really trying to help small businesses succeed, it should be doing more to help them grow.

The new legislation proposed in Bill 105 also means that Ontario businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption on the first \$400,000 on their payroll. This will effectively increase taxes on family-owned businesses by thousands of dollars. I would note, Speaker, that during clause-by-clause consideration, the Liberals and the NDP also voted against the PC amendment to eliminate this \$5-million cap. This will discourage businesses from hiring or expanding.

What's more, Bill 105 will offer marginal benefit for Ontario businesses in the bigger scheme of things. Consider it in the context of this government's track record: hydro rates that have tripled in the past decade, and which continue to skyrocket—the energy minister unveiled a 42% increase; increased taxes through new WSIB and College of Trade fees, among others; and the red tape burden on businesses has increased dramatically since 2003.

Improvised and ill-considered policies such as these are not helping Ontario small businesses put down roots or grow their operations. In fact, they are driving new jobs away and driving up costs for all businesses in Ontario. This province's debt has doubled since the party opposite took office. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that this province's net direct and indirect debt stood at roughly 226% of provincial revenues at the end of March 2013. Reckless spending is by no means a new thing for the party opposite. But what is notable is that all of this spending has not significantly improved the day-

to-day reality of Ontario's small businesses and medium businesses.

This government's lax business fundamentals represent a barrier to economic growth in Ontario. Bill 105 skirts around that uncomfortable fact, side-stepping the substantial issues and problems, such as the structural cost facing our job creators. Fees and premiums pile up fast in Ontario. The CFIB regularly identifies the thickest of red tape and regulations, as it drives down productivity as businesses are lost in the forest of paperwork. Inter-provincial trade barriers shave billions off of our productivity and hurt Ontario businesses' ability to compete at home and abroad. It is shameful that this government is ready to embrace comprehensive free trade with the EU, but not in Canada's neighbourhood.

Ontario's trade deficit has been called the single largest drag on our province's economic growth, and it shows no sign of going anywhere under this government. According to the Liberals' own trade facts sheet, Ontario exports from 2012 were actually below where they stood in 2003. Imports levels have increased up by 15% in that time. The result is that Ontario's annual trade deficit has more than doubled since the Liberals came to office. This is just one cost of this government's willingness to settle for the status quo.

1000

Over the last decade, Ontario has seen over 300,000 manufacturing jobs vanish. Every week brings news of another business closing, and those layoffs and job losses ripple through the economy. For the life of me, I will never understand why this government doesn't take the situation more seriously, why the Premier has repeatedly referred to the manufacturing crisis as a myth. Maybe it's intended to convey confidence, but in the face of a flurry of plant closures this year, it comes across as a little out of touch with reality.

Having the right environment for growth is everything. It starts with leadership, and it demands ambition. Frankly, I'm discouraged to see the Minister of Finance showing so little of either in Bill 105.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise again today on Bill 105. I listened to the member from Burlington's comments on the bill. She spoke about the province's trade deficit in the context of our multilateral trade agreements that are either currently enacted or proposed. I'm not sure if she actually understands the relationship between those trade agreements and the deficit that exists. Free trade agreements are purported to balance the scales of exports and imports and to allow our large manufacturing primarily to reach different markets, but invariably that isn't happening.

When we talk about the large corporations that are actually the hallmarks of manufacturing, or even our raw materials, those large corporations have benefited tremendously from corporate tax reductions at the federal and provincial levels to the extent that the federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, has said that they're holding

multi-billions of dollars in reserves. They are not re-investing that money into this country, and that certainly would have a detrimental effect on productivity; whereas small businesses, we know, do pour most of their profits back into their operations, either enhancing their product, enhancing their services or hiring employees.

I think the member from Burlington is quite far off in terms of her understanding of how free trade actually affects our country. I've lived in Windsor and Essex county, which has seen the detriment of our manufacturing sector because of free trade: jobs gone to Mexico, gone to China. That's free trade in its effects, and it certainly has to stop. We need fair trade in this country, not free trade.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I think we are now past 23 hours of debate on a bill to give some 60,000 small businesses in Ontario better tax treatment and lower taxes beginning next year. What we need to do in this House is pass this bill. I wish the opposition would stop filibustering a bill that they're going to vote for, that businesses all across Ontario need. Get it to committee, get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I very attentively listened to the member from Burlington and her rather thoughtful remarks, and I thought that they were very much on message.

I can always relate to what's actually going on. If you look in Ontario today—just the other day, the Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, issued the 2013 report. This is what some of the media reports on it; this does relate to the state of business in Ontario. Here's one here: The headline is "Shocking Liberal Incompetence." Well, actually, it's not shocking because the evidence is, in 10 years, double the debt, double the deficit, and you can't get access to drugs.

Now there's a new tax going to come in somewhere during the Christmas break, when everybody is on holidays, to increase taxes on transit.

One of the things in here is, "Lysyk uncovered obscenely generous pensions, salaries, bonuses"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member one more time, how does this relate to the bill?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, because the state of the economy is very much related to the deficit. Now, they're going to try to help small businesses in Bill 105. They're providing—here's the issue though, it's very important to frame this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): How does it relate to the bill and the person who spoke before?

Mr. John O'Toole: Bill 105's intent is to take the employer health tax exemption threshold from \$400,000 of payroll to \$450,000. We wanted it to go to \$800,000. Once you hit \$5 million in payroll, you aren't entitled to the \$450,000 exemption, which means their tax is going up, so they're killing larger and medium-sized business—

car dealerships, Home Depots, those kind of businesses—many of them owned by members of the community who pay taxes and employ people.

This is not helpful. In fact, the tax relief would be about \$63 a month. With the \$63 a month, you still can't meet the payroll tax—on the electricity at that store. It has gone up by 43%. I can't trust this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to rise in this House. I'd like to wish everybody at home a merry Christmas, but I'd really like to comment on the member from Burlington.

She had some very, very thoughtful comments. I didn't agree with a lot of them, but there were a couple that I really did agree with. She focused on what seemed to be some lack of leadership on the jobs issue from the Premier. I would agree with that. I would like to bring that a little bit forward, because recently the Premier challenged the agri-food processing sector that they were going to create 100,000 to 200,000 jobs. She challenged them to that, but she didn't announce any tools for that. She just did the press release, and since, we've had Heinz announce a closure; we've had Kellogg's announcing a closure.

I think the province would be better served by not so much challenges and press releases and more actual working towards reaching those goals.

In northern Ontario, we've had similar experience. We've had for years—my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin knows very well because he's the critic on this issue. We've had years of announcements of the Ring of Fire. We had an announcement by this government that they were going to build a smelter in Capreol. Actually, it was an announcement of a pre-feasibility study, but they didn't bother putting that in the press release.

Once again, a great press release: "These are the things that we are going to accomplish," but when you look deep and you look long, there's actually nothing there, and that is a problem. If you're going to challenge the agri-food industry to create jobs—and they can create jobs—give them the tools. Do the work. Just don't talk. You need to have more than running towards goals. You need to actually have goals.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Burlington, you have two minutes.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Speaker. Going back to my earlier comment, Bill 105 is a small bill. It does a little bit of good, but that pales in relationship to the bigger picture. The government seems unwilling to take the strong action to address the problems this province faces and the challenges that confront business in Ontario. The measures contained within Bill 105 may offset some of the tax burden that the government has loaded on to businesses in Ontario, but it won't make up for crushing hydro rates and it won't make any real impact on the job crisis that grips this province.

The Auditor General's findings on things like Ornge, the gas plant cancellations and now the OPG scandal drive home the point that this government desperately needs to get its House in order. We don't need consultations without timelines or conversations without end or electronic suggestion boxes. We don't need a jogging partner. We need this government to show some leadership. The party opposite must do more than just name the challenges we face as a province in this 21st century. It must show the character and confidence to take the steps needed to overcome those challenges.

But challenges aren't barriers. They're opportunities to do things differently and to do things better. Urgent action and bold ideas are needed to grow our economy and balance the budget. Sadly, Bill 105 is not that. This is more tinkering around the edges by this government, and it will not do enough to solve the job crisis that we face in this province every day. We can no longer trust this government.

1010

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise in this Legislature to speak to Bill 105. I think it's a very important piece of legislation, one that merits all the debates that we are witnessing today. I know members on the governing side have been complaining about the fact that we actually want to debate legislation in this chamber, and I noticed, in one of the two-minute hits, that the member from Windsor-Tecumseh offered some quotes about the true nature of our parliamentary democracy meaning that we have to respect and honour Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and of course that happens in both the PC and NDP caucuses in this Legislative chamber.

This act is called the Supporting Small Businesses Act, and in doing so, I think it's worth understanding and analyzing the plight of small businesses in the province of Ontario.

There's a recent survey that was conducted that asked small business owners who were within four years of opening their business whether they would actually do so again, whether these small business operators who recently opened businesses, having hindsight, would do it again, and 75% of those businesses said no.

That speaks to the climate of businesses and small businesses in the province of Ontario. There's lots of red tape. There are lots of barriers to success. There are lots of hurdles that small business owners right across the province of Ontario have to surmount in order to succeed, in order to be the job creators we all want them to be.

I think it's very important to have an honest discussion about the plight of small businesses in the province of Ontario. We're talking about a piece of legislation here in Bill 105 that purports to actually be helping these small businesses. How does it do that? It raises the threshold by which some small businesses can have an extra tax exemption. That tax exemption amounts to less than \$1,000 in a year. I'm not sure how many jobs are going

to be created by the very mention that \$1,000 is going to be saved by these small businesses. While it is always important to look at the taxation component that we see in the way we manage our economy, we have to look at the net effect of these ideas.

I listened intently to the debate this morning, even though I am in the midst, like all members of this Legislature sending out their Christmas cards—I noticed that there were some comments about whether businesses over \$5 million—I believe the member from Essex was talking about this—actually need the extra money. I think that businesses that have a payroll of over \$5 million do in fact need the extra money. These are the very businesses that are employing dozens, if not hundreds, of people in communities right across the province of Ontario.

What we're saying to those businesses that are employing dozens, if not hundreds, of people across the province of Ontario is, "You have too much money, and we need to take more from you." I think the very notion of having that attitude about businesses that are employing families right in this province is simply the wrong attitude.

We on this side of the House believe in tax relief. We believe that tax relief does stimulate the economy. But you can't mix a tax relief measure with a tax increase, because it nets out. There's nothing that's going to be positively gained in the process of doing that, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the small businesses that I'm touring in my riding have serious concerns about whether they're going to be able to sustain what is happening right here in Ontario. I want to mention this, Mr. Speaker. I visited, very recently, Integrated Packaging Films, which is a small business in my riding that employs about 20 to 30 individuals and is in the recycling business—a recycling plastics business.

Mr. Speaker, they gave me their hydro bill. This is an authenticated, real hydro bill from Integrated Packaging Films that was for October 30, 2013—very, very recent. The idea here is that their global adjustment for one month is almost \$38,000, which is the salary of an individual in the province of Ontario, simply going to global adjustment.

If we want to help small businesses, we have to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: We're pleased to have three grade 5 classes with us today from St. Jerome Catholic school in Newmarket, along with teachers Ms. Lostracco and Ms. Alexander.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today, page Matteya Wendling's family is with us: her parents, Rosanne and Kevin Wendling; sisters Justine, Kyara, Ariel and Mia; and grandmother Denise LaFontaine. They're in the members' gallery.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's my pleasure this morning to introduce Anjum and Abid Raza, who are visiting with us today. They're the aunt and uncle of my chief of staff, Omar Raza.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome the mother and grandparents of the page from Ottawa Centre, Amy Falkner: mother, Julia Martin, and grandparents Elizabeth and Michael Martin. Welcome to your Queen's Park. Good to see you again.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to introduce my legislative learner—it's a co-op program from the University of Waterloo—Rachel Henderson, who has been with us for three months. She's getting towards the end of her term, and she's done a fantastic job. Thank you very much, Rachel.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to ask members to join in welcoming to the House Mr. Peter Shurman, the former MPP for Thornhill, who is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. That's not an introduction; he's still a member.

The member from Oxford on introductions.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise to recognize legislative intern Mitch Davidson, who is in the gallery today. I want to thank him for his extraordinary work in my office in this past busy term. Thank you very much, Mitch, for a job well done.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to introduce Pam Abeysekera. She's a co-op student from the University of Waterloo who has been working in the Liberal service bureau. She lives in the great riding of Brampton—Springdale. Her last day is on the 20th, but I want to thank her for her service.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce my Queen's Park staff, Stephen Dasko and Ryan Nutter; and my constituency staff, Jacqueline Flowers, Suzanne Bolton and Neave Greig. They've been a tremendous help to me over the course of this year. They make me look good and they help me get things done. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to introduce to the assembly today Jamie Robertson, who is here from Maxville, as well as his wife, Roxane Villeneuve Robertson, an Ontario Progressive Conservative candidate, former page and daughter of the great Noble Villeneuve, who was once an agriculture minister here.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just before we get into that moment which is question period, I want to wish the people of Ontario, on the part of the government, a very happy and safe holiday season. I want to thank the first responders, the retailers and the ER personnel, who will

all continue to work, no matter what the holiday. To all of the members and all of the personnel in the Legislature, I hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all of our guests for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. Tim Hudak: In the spirit of the season, let me wish everybody as well here in the chamber and across the province a very merry Christmas, with good health and happiness in the new year.

I take it that means we won't get a jobs plan as a Christmas gift. It sounds like the House isn't sitting next week; I was hoping for that. I was hoping for that jobs plan. We still had a few days left.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the member from St. Catharines is trying to distract me here, so let me get to my question.

Premier, you're receiving today the Golden panel, which we understand is going to increase the gas tax in the province by five cents a litre. If you're a commuter filling up your tank a couple of times a week, or if you're a family with two cars trying to get the kids to soccer and hockey, that's a punishing new tax increase.

I want to know, Premier: For the average commuter coming from Mississauga, from York region or from Durham, how much is that going to impact their pocket-book on an annual basis?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, Dr. Anne Golden will release her report later today. I certainly welcome this report because we on this side of the House are convinced that investing in infrastructure, including transit infrastructure, is absolutely necessary to the future economic health of this province.

The reality is that I understand that the opposition does not have a plan for funding transit and does not have a commitment to building the kind of infrastructure that we know is needed in the GTHA and, quite frankly, beyond. But we believe that those investments, along with investments in people and investments in a strong business climate, are what are needed in order for the economy to grow.

I look forward to receiving Dr. Golden's report and continuing to make those investments in infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I take it that means that you don't know or you're not telling us exactly how much a massive increase in the gas tax is going to cost average families and commuters in the province of Ontario. Premier, I come to this from a very different place than you or the leader of the NDP. I believe that taxpayers are already doing more than their fair share, that taxes are

actually too high. You believe the taxes are not high enough.

Premier, I also believe that the top issue in our province is jobs—actually good jobs that you can count on, not the part-time or minimum-wage jobs that you seem to be focused on in our province. If you're making everything more expensive by putting gas taxes up, if you're taking money out of the pockets of Ontario families, isn't that actually going to make a very desperate job situation even worse in the province of Ontario? Shouldn't we be focusing on creating jobs and sparing our economy, not taking even more jobs and money out of the pockets of hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very interesting: The Leader of the Opposition never talks about the costs of not having transit. He never talks about the hours and hours wasted. He never talks about the cost of sitting in gridlock. He never talks about the cost to businesses of not being able to move their goods and services around. He never talks about the quality of life that is diminished by having to sit in that gridlock.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition, I look forward to receiving Anne Golden's report. The Minister of Transportation is going to review the recommendations carefully. But we are determined to continue to build transit in the GTHA and to invest in infrastructure across this province. He does not have that determination, and he does not have a plan to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No, I think the Premier's kidding around here a little bit. If you want to know what I'm determined to do: I'm determined to get our economy moving, create jobs and get taxes down in our province.

Premier, you and I have talked about this, right? We've sat in your office. We've talked across your desk. I've laid out my plan for transit, and I stand behind a proud history in the Ontario PC Party that has built 64 subway stations in the province of Ontario. And the Liberal coalition? Zero.

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In fact, this morning Doug Holyday and I laid out even more detail: creating an Ontario transportation trust; to put revenue there from prioritizing government spending as the economy grows; to sell off surplus land and buildings; to work in public-private partnerships; to put that money, locked in for taxpayers, so they know where it goes. I've talked about this for over a year, Premier, including with you personally.

I'll build subways. I won't increase taxes. You'll increase taxes, and you never get anything done. I think our choices will get Ontario moving.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's terrific that the Leader of the Opposition has taken our idea of a Trillium

Trust and has now entrenched it in his plan. I think that's great, fantastic. And it is terrific that, of late, the Leader of the Opposition is talking about transit, but he talks about it as an unfunded plan. He has no plan to fund transit, Mr. Speaker. He simply talks about it like a nice ethereal idea.

The reality is we have a plan to fund it. We understand that those investments in infrastructure and in transit are critical to the economic growth of the province. There is no such plan coming forward from the Leader of the Opposition.

The other reality is he talks about jobs, and yet we are trying to get Bill 105 passed, which would help 60,000 small businesses in this province. It takes an idea from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business to help those payroll taxes. They are not supporting us, Mr. Speaker. We need their help to get Bill 105 passed.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I'm going to be a bit facetious here. You and I have talked about this over a year ago. We laid out our plan over a year ago for an Ontario transportation trust. You stole that idea and you called it the Ontario Trillium Trust. Fair enough. I guess imitation is the best form of flattery. But here's the difference: We fund that by setting priorities, by doing public-private partnerships, by selling off excess land and buildings and setting aside priorities in the capital budget, \$13 billion in the year. That's how we fund it.

How do you fund it? A punishing new gas tax on hard-working families in our province. I don't think we need to treat driving as some kind of sin. I don't think we need a new sin tax on driving. In fact, that will cost us jobs in the province of Ontario.

Let me ask you a very clear question: If you think hydro rates can go up 60%, if you think it's okay to have that kind of waste at OPG, if you think it's okay to blow \$1 billion on gas plants in the province—and now you've got the gall to come back to increase gas by 5 cents a litre? I've just got to ask you, what planet are you living on that that is somehow okay?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please.

Before I go to the Premier, I've tried to allow members to discipline themselves, even while I'm speaking, and to ask members now—even if this is, possibly, the last day, I'll go back into the routine of the warnings. Discipline yourselves, please, without the comments and the interjections, because now that's only raising my temperature.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition has not got the full story from the report. I ask him to read the report when it's released today. We will review the recommendations. We are determined to continue to invest in transit and in infrastructure.

You know, the Leader of the Opposition talks about what he would do. What he is on record as saying he would do is cancel the Hamilton LRT, cancel the Mississauga LRT, cancel the York rapid transit and cancel Waterloo region's LRT. That's the plan, Mr. Speaker, and that is absolutely unacceptable to us.

We believe that investing in the region, investing in the province, making sure that communities across this region and across the province have the infrastructure, including transit, that they need in order for economic growth—we believe that those investments are critical.

I am not going to suggest that it is easy for a government to make these long-term investments, but if we don't, then we're abdicating our responsibility to future generations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess we're going to have to have another meeting. I know I chide you sometimes for a lot of meetings and conversations, but I laid out this plan over a year ago. You and I have talked about it on several occasions. You've taken some parts of our plan, but I think you're making a big mistake in increasing taxes on families, particularly commuters here in the greater Toronto area. Your plan, according to the Golden commission, is to increase gas taxes across the province as a whole.

Our plan is to build subways—I think that is what world-class cities do—and expand highway capacity. I'll keep talking about it. I've been talking about it for some time now as leader.

But here's a question I have for you. You've done studies, and then you had a study of studies and now the Golden panel is effectively a study of a study of a study. So this is your final decision, right? You're not calling a friend here; this is the final call. Your plan is to increase gas taxes by five cents a litre, or are you just kicking this down the road for another study?

Here's the difference: Leaders make decisions. I've got my plan. I'm ready to go. It will build subways, expand highways. It will create jobs in the province of Ontario. Is this your plan? Yes or no? I've got mine. I'm ready to go.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's almost laughable. I'm trying not to, but, Mr. Speaker, it's almost laughable that the notion that an unfunded plan that would cancel the projects that I listed in Hamilton, Mississauga, York region, Waterloo region—that that is somehow a plan that would help transit and would help the people in this region and beyond who are sitting in traffic, businesses that are trying to move their goods around.

The reality is that we have to make those investments. We are determined to do that. We've said all along that we would put the plan into the 2014 budget. That is the target that we are on.

I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will read the Anne Golden report. I hope even more, though, that the Leader of the Opposition understands that if we abdicate this responsibility now and we do not make investments in transit, then future generations will look back and say, "What were you thinking? Why were you not making the investments that we needed in order for this?"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I think people will listen to you here today, and they'll say that you said you were going to increase hydro rates by 60%. Your energy minister famously said, "Don't worry about the gas plant waste. That's only a cup of coffee." Now you're going to increase taxes by five cents a litre on gas. They're going to say, "What are you thinking?" and "Who are you talking to?" This makes no sense.

We've laid out a plan that will actually invest in subways to go underground to build world-class cities, expand highway capacity and set up an Ontario Trillium Trust to fund that plan.

Your plan is to increase taxes, to waste more money; and let me ask you this, too, because I'm not sure if this is your plan, or another study of a study that will be followed by another study, but I see the member from St. Catharines gave the gas tax a standing ovation. I see the member from Peterborough gave the gas tax a standing ovation. Let me understand this, to be clear: Are you going to increase gas taxes in Peterborough, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls to fund subway expansion in Toronto? Is that actually your plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to read the report when it's released today.

The fact is that the Leader of the Opposition can diminish the process of actually talking to people who understand how transit works and where it needs to be built. The Leader of the Opposition can grab on to a populist notion that building subways everywhere is the answer. That's not the case. The Leader of the Opposition can say that he has a plan to build transit when there is no funding apparent. He has made no funding announcements, except to say that he will slash services, that he will cut thousands and thousands of jobs in order to slash services across government, as he did as part of a previous cabinet. So there is no credibility to the notion that he is putting forward.

We are determined to invest in the infrastructure, including transit, that is needed in order to grow this economy, and we—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to begin, on behalf of New Democrats, by wishing the people of this province, the members, all of the staff of the precinct and yourself, Speaker, a very merry Christmas and happy holidays. It's going to be a wonderful season. I hope that everyone enjoys it.

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Speaker, I also want, on behalf of New Democrats, to acknowledge a member who won't be joining us in the future here, for whom it is his last day, and that's the member for Thornhill. The member for Thornhill has served this Legislature well for his constituents. He has been passionate. We haven't always agreed, that's for sure, but he did some heavy lifting for the Conservative caucus as their finance critic. He has worked very, very hard for a number of years here, and he deserves our thanks and our respect as he leaves this place. He was passionate, he was committed to the work he was doing, and his radio voice will be well missed in this chamber.

Speaker, I would like to put my first question to the Premier. Ten years ago, the Premier was elected as part of a Liberal team that insisted that the scandalous perks, bonuses and high salaries that drove up hydro bills were a failure of leadership and that they would "never be repeated." Why has nothing changed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to reinforce what the leader of the third party said about the member for Thornhill and thank him for his service. Thank you very much.

As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the culture at OPG clearly has been resistant to change, and that has been through subsequent governments. Government after government has made changes. Those changes have not created the kind of culture that we think is appropriate. We are going to put in place controls that would give government some direct authority over the compensation at OPG. That is something that has not been done by governments before, but clearly it is what is needed, and that is what we are going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier insists that she's taking the latest scandals at the OPG seriously, but where have the Liberals been for the last decade? They've paid lip service to reining in sky-high salaries yet done nothing at all about it. Meanwhile, everyday Ontarians are paying the price through their hydro bills for Liberal inaction. Will the Premier admit today that the failure of leadership is in the Premier's office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, no, because the fact is that this is a situation that has persisted over a number of governments. We did make changes as a government previously. We made those changes, but the culture persisted, as it did under the Conservatives and as it did under the NDP.

So what I'm saying is, we need to put in place government controls that are direct controls on compensation, because the culture seems to be resistant to the other

changes that have been made. The culture has been resistant, whether it has been a Conservative government, an NDP government or a Liberal government. We're going to make the changes that are necessary in order for government to have those controls over those compensation packages.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With all due respect, the fact is people feeling squeezed harder and harder than ever by lost jobs and shrinking paycheques have heard this government promise over and over that things will change, and they see the same old story being played over and over and over again. They pay the bills. Well-connected insiders get the millions.

The Premier is blaming people and pointing fingers everywhere she can, but she's refusing to admit one simple fact: The buck stops with her. At what point does the Premier stop looking around for people to blame, show some leadership and admit that the Liberals have simply failed to respect the people of Ontario's money?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The leader of the third party refers to the 10-year period; the audit was over a 10-year period. However, there has been a business transformation plan under way at OPG, and it's important to note that, over the last three years, OPG has undergone a significant transformation: 1,500 full-time employees have already been eliminated. The goal is to reduce the number of staff by another 800 employees, going from 11,640 in 2011 to 9,308 by 2016, making a total reduction of 2,300 full-time employees. In addition, under the 2007 Agency Review Panel, OPG's executive salaries were reduced by 25% to 30% in new contracts. Also, the member should be aware of the fact that over the last eight years, OPG has generated \$7 billion, bottom line—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GASOLINE TAX

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Imagine how much they would have generated had they not been pulling down those exorbitant salaries.

My next question is for the Premier. People are feeling squeezed more than ever by job losses and higher bills. They've been asked to make sacrifice after sacrifice in tough times. They're paying more in HST, more in hydro bills, even while jobs are being lost, and paycheques simply aren't keeping up.

Does the Premier think it's fair to ask them to pay more in a gasoline tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I have to say I would expect these questions from the Conservative caucus; I would expect these questions from the Leader of Opposition. But from a party that apparently is progressive, that puts itself out as a party that believes in protecting the environment, believes in public transit—I really find it strange that the leader of the third party does not

seem to grasp that if we do not invest in transit, if we do not make those difficult decisions to invest in infrastructure and create a transit network that will work for the region and beyond—if we don't do that, then we are abdicating our responsibility.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So I have to say to the leader of the third party, I am very, very surprised, given the number of members that you have who I know are environmentalists, who I know believe in transit, that you would pose that question to me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

I'm going to ask the Attorney General that when the Premier is answering, he not interject.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm also going to ask the member from Hamilton Mountain to come to order.

Supplementary, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families feel like they're being stretched to the breaking point. That's what New Democrats believe because that's what we hear every day when we go back to our ridings. But while they pay more and more, they don't see others sharing the same sacrifice. They've been told to pay higher hydro bills, pay an HST on gasoline and home heating, and sacrifice services that they rely on, but they've watched as the Premier has let hydro CEOs collect million-dollar bonuses and plow ahead with tax loopholes for Ontario's richest corporations.

It's a simple question: Does the Premier think it's fair to ask these same families to pay more yet again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Families are stretched; they are stretched. Part of the reason they're stretched is that they don't have the public transit services that they need.

I would ask the leader of the third party to talk to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, to talk to the member for Beaches–East York, to talk to the member for Toronto–Danforth, to talk to the members for Trinity–Spadina, Parkdale–High Park and Stoney Creek. Ask your whole caucus whether they have constituents who want to see investments in infrastructure, who want to see investments in transit, because the quality of life that people have to deal with when they're sitting in gridlock, when they don't have access to the transit that they need, is not what we think is acceptable.

If we do not make those investments, if we do not have a coherent transit plan going forward, as the third party does not have, then we are abdicating our responsibility. We're not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to invest in transit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier needs to talk to the single mom in Scarborough who can't pay her bills today. That's who the Premier needs to talk to.

The people who make Ontario work have heard promises of change for a decade, but they've seen the same old Liberals offering the same old priorities. People are paying the highest hydro bills in Canada while hydro CEOs collect million-dollar bonuses. People are paying new, unfair sales taxes and fees while the government plows ahead with new tax loopholes for corporations.

Can the Premier make it clear today, right now: Will she be asking families to pay more yet again with a new gasoline tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The single mom in Scarborough doesn't want to spend two hours to get downtown. The single mom in Scarborough wants to be able to pick up her child at daycare and get them to school. The single mom in Scarborough wants to be able to take the subway.

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We are going to invest in transit exactly because the families in this region need that support. As I say, I understand these questions coming from the Conservatives—they've never believed in transit—but I think it is shocking that the third party does not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. I'm a little confused about the revenue tools. Sometimes you use them, and sometimes you don't use them. Sometimes you need them, and sometimes you don't need them. I can't figure out when those times are.

When you implemented all-day kindergarten for \$1.5 billion a year, you did not need revenue tools. When you paid off Liberal fiascos like the gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and the overspending at OPG, you did not need revenue tools. But now all of a sudden, people want transit, and you need revenue tools. I don't understand why, in this situation, you need the revenue tools.

What I want to know, Premier, is, is this for financial reasons or environmental reasons, and why now?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is hysterically funny. The member opposite, the member for Etobicoke–Lake-shore, voted for a tax increase every year. I got a 2%

property increase. When I was a mayor, I cut taxes. He voted for tax increases.

The place which he comes from and the leader he used to follow—an interesting personality. Even Mayor Ford has increased taxes and is proposing a compounding tax. When the member did not vote for taxes, what did he do? He cancelled the subway in Etobicoke.

He tells his own truth. When he voted for tax increases, he got subways; when he didn't vote for tax increases, he cancelled subways. The Tories are doing it again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Premier, the motorists in Toronto and Hamilton are already contributing more than their share to the transportation costs of the province of Ontario. I've had that information given to me by the CAA and others. Now you're wanting to add more costs to those people. I don't think that's fair, but maybe you do.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: So how would you fund it?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community and Social Services, come to order.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Well, we will fund it through rewriting the priorities. We would take the small portion that's needed out of the overall cost of the budget. We'll fund it in the same way that you funded all-day kindergarten.

But what I want to know, Premier, is, before you implement this new tax, this new plan, will you go to the public and let the electorate have a say first?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have owned a business and run a business, and I think it's important on this side of the House we do try to take a broader perspective. When the member opposite looks at a household budget, he should talk to the member from Caledon. You have four or five cars. If you actually, because you have no transit in your neighbourhood, have to have a beater for your 16-year-old or a beater for your 17-year-old, that's \$7,000 to \$11,000 per child to get them to school. There are too many families in the 905 who have three or four or five cars; some of them are 10 or 15 years old. That's pretty expensive on the household budget.

I will give you one hint about what's in the Golden report. One of the things that she will tell you is that the average commuter right now spends \$700 more burning gas with their car not moving. Nothing in her proposal costs a person more—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In 2010, New Democrats

asked a very simple question: What was Dr. Mazza's salary? That was our simple question. Three years later, we are still asking the very same question. The minister can provide us with every excuse in the book about why she didn't know, but the fact of the matter is, tracking his salary and the financial structure of Ornge is the responsibility of this minister; it's her job.

Now we can see that for the brief time Ornge was reporting their salaries to the sunshine list, those numbers were inaccurate. Will the minister simply admit that she failed to provide the oversight necessary?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have to say, this is a very bizarre question, and let me tell you why it's a bizarre question. The MPP from Guelph, when she was on committee—because we all wanted clarity—requested all compensation paid to Dr. Mazza over a period of six years, I believe. That information was tabled with the Clerk of the Committee over a year ago. Members have had access to that information for many, many months, and they simply haven't read it. So the bizarre question is going to get a straight answer: You've got all the information you've asked for, and today committee members received a summary of that because that was asked for as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: What's bizarre is that the Minister of Health would receive a report, a forensic audit, and not read it. That to me is bizarre.

The forensic audit lays out a litany of disturbing facts: details of personal loans that Mazza was given, the web of companies whose primary purpose was to shield executive salaries, and the sheer excess of money that was given to a select few.

The fact that two years into the investigation at Ornge new details and disturbing facts are still surfacing means that Ontarians are asking the question: Has anything changed?

It seems that this minister has done nothing to ensure that the root cause of this problem, which is salary disclosure, the sunshine list, is accurate. She has done nothing to prove that the oversight has improved. She continues to leave out important details in the hope that this scandal will simply go away.

How can the minister assure Ontarians that another Ornge won't happen again, given her inability to learn from her mistakes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, this is very strange coming from a man who has had documents and apparently has not read them.

It took only one year of Chris Mazza's salary to give me all the information I needed to take swift action. I called in a forensic audit team. That forensic audit team reported a few weeks later, and the findings of that forensic audit team were so shocking that it was immediately referred to the Ontario Provincial Police. That's where it should have gone. If I had to make the same decision over again, it's exactly the decision that would have been made.

I have been nothing but upfront. All of the information that the committee has requested has been there for months and months.

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EDUCATION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation, l'honorable Liz Sandals. The Wynne government believes in creating a more prosperous and just society, and that means empowering people by investing in education. Our government has made consistent and persistent investments, upgrades and capital projects so that our children get the best education available in the English-speaking world. Our kids need such quality education in order to compete for the high-skills jobs of tomorrow's economy.

In uncertain times, I believe it is to every citizen's advantage if they have a government build a strong future for Ontarians. As examples, graduation rates are up 15 points from 2003 to 83% this year, and overall, 71% of students are achieving the provincial standard in grades 3 and 6 combined, up 17 points from 54% a decade ago.

Speaker, can the minister please inform this chamber: How do the results we are seeing here in Ontario compare to other jurisdictions around the world?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for raising this issue. I must say that our educators, our teachers and the parents deserve a tremendous amount of credit for the success that we've had in our schools.

I'm pleased to share the latest results from the Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA, which is conducted by the OECD. The results were released last week, and they've again ranked Ontario students as some of the best in the world.

The results prove that the investments we're making in our students and in our schools are making a difference. In fact, both Canada and Ontario performed significantly higher than 48 other jurisdictions on the paper-based math assessment. Ontario performed above the OECD average in math, science and reading.

Like most other jurisdictions across Canada, however, we know we have more work to do on math, and that's why math—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister Sandals, for your stewardship of this essential file, which ultimately will determine our children's, and Ontario's, future.

When I tour my own riding and the schools of Etobicoke North, I can see the results and the on-the-ground analogues of the acknowledgements, success and virtuous cycles that Ontario has cultivated. But following the mantra of our government, while we've seen great progress over the last 10 years, there is, as the minister has just said, more work to be done.

Minister, I know you have been engaged with our partners in education, businesses, students and parents on

the next phase of our education system. Can you please inform this House: What are some of the elements for success that you envision for the education system in the years ahead?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We've had great success with programs that involve experiential learning with our secondary students. For example, the specialist high skills major, dual credits and expanded opportunities for co-op education have all helped with the increase in secondary school graduation rates, and we will carry on with those.

We're also embracing 21st-century learning, with a focus on creative and critical thinking as we move forward by making better use of technology and digital resources to engage students and enhance their skills. In fact, on the PISA results, we've begun to see that showing up already. When you look at it, PISA had a subset where they had a computer-based test as opposed to paper-based. On the computer-based test, Ontario students did extraordinarily well. So we can see that move into more technology-based learning beginning to pay off with the students who are writing the tests now.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Premier, on Tuesday we learned that there was massive mismanagement at the OPG, but we learned in 2011 that there were real problems at the OPG through a report by the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board. They told this government that massive increases to salaries, pensions and benefits were showing up on people's—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sudbury, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —and that's why they denied them a full rate increase.

You knew then. You knew in 2013, just last week, when the auditor came out, that this was a systemic problem with that board of directors, with that management team and with your minister.

You have one option left: You have to fire the three of them—the minister, the chair and the CEO. Will you do it, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. The member from Oxford, those are expensive desks.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I do want to take the opportunity to wish the compliments of the season to my official critic. Our ridings are neighbouring ridings. She is my constituent, and I'm her constituent.

Hon. Jeff Leal: What a relationship.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have a wonderful working relationship.

I do want to answer the question, though, Mr. Speaker. And that is, I mentioned earlier in response to the leader of the third party that there was a business transformation

that started exactly in 2011, which has already resulted in 1,500 full-time employees eliminated, 800 more on the way over the next year or two. That's significant progress. In addition, in 2007, under the agency review panel, OPG's executive salaries were reduced by 25% to 30% for new executive contracts, and the OPG executive compensation envelope has decreased by 9% since 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier, because I didn't receive an answer on whether or not she would fire the head of the OPG, the chair of the OPG and the minister. While the minister may have me as a constituent and I have him, I can say that there's one MPP of the two ridings who is actually providing reasonable leadership to the people of this province, and it is Tim Hudak's MPP, not Kathleen Wynne's.

So, Speaker, I will stand here in my place and I will ask the Premier of Ontario one final thing. Will she direct the OEB to pull the rate increase that is being asked at the OPG this year, and will she ensure that ratepayers are not on the hook anymore for handsome salaries, big bonuses and lavish pensions that her government has authorized? Yes or no? Will she fire them, and will she make sure that that stops now?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Sometimes the outrage is really outrageous, but I have to say that she keeps referring to the price of electricity, and her leader has agreed that he has no answer on that, because when the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he could promise lower electricity rates, he said the answer is no to that. He has no policy whatsoever.

The only policy he has is a white paper to privatize OPG, and in privatizing OPG, we know what the Toronto Sun has said about that. They tried that once before, and "Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage and the Conservatives, faced with rising public fury, abandoned the scheme, leaving a financial disaster in their wake."

They still have a financial disaster. They have no plan whatsoever. How are they going to govern without having a plan before the people of Ontario?

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The question is to the Premier. Yesterday, this government made it official. The dream of creating 50,000 green energy jobs was officially buried in the fine print of its new energy legislation. Quebec is protecting its green jobs. Can you explain why Quebec figured out how to protect its green jobs and you can't?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Coincidentally, about three days ago, Quebec announced its new electricity rate, and it's going up by 5.8%.

Our long-term energy plan will have 50% renewables by 2025. We are continuing to invest in clean energy. We are continuing to take significant steps to push price pressure down. One of that is by taking \$15 billion out of the cost base by indefinitely deferring new nuclear. They still haven't said "yes," that they agree with eliminating new nuclear. I'd like to hear the word "yes" from the NDP—yes, yes, yes, you agree with taking \$15 billion of cost pressures out of the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Evasion by the government is not a compliment. It is not a strategy that the people of Ontario want.

This government could have created those promised jobs and delivered green energy at lower prices. It didn't. Quebec has gotten it right. Not only are the prices paid to Quebec's green energy generators lower than Ontario's, but they have stayed on the right side of international law. Will this government follow the lead of Quebec and protect Ontario's green jobs?

1120

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: They did not support the Green Energy Act. They have no policy on renewables. They have no policy on clean energy. Where is it? Show it to the people of Ontario. Just like your leader, Mr. Critic, you have no policy in any way, shape or form.

You are a disgrace to your NDP base. They like renewable energy, they like our decision on nuclear, and they are telling us by emails and phone calls that they like what we're doing with clean energy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

I'm pleased to stand in the House today representing my riding of Ottawa—Orléans. My riding, like so many others in Ontario, has a diverse population with diverse needs, but one thing that everyone in this province needs at some point in their life is high-quality health care.

One of the chief goals of this government's action plan for health care is for the right care to be delivered in the right place. For families in Orléans, that means a facility providing excellent care in our community of over 100,000 people. Can the minister please provide this House with an update on the proposed Orléans health hub?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Ottawa—Orléans for this question, and also for his continued and passionate advocacy on this and other issues. I know the member has been fighting for a health hub in Orléans for quite some time now. The people of Ottawa—Orléans know that they have a strong champion in this House for their health care needs, and I know that

the Orléans Family Health Hub will be an important part of this member's legacy.

I'm pleased to tell the House and the people of Ottawa—Orléans today that we continue to make progress on the Orléans health hub. We made this an important commitment as part of our Building Together plan in 2011, and since then, the Champlain LHIN has submitted a stage 1 submission for the first phase of the health hub. Now local health care and community leaders are working together with the LHIN to move this project forward.

When complete, the Orléans Family Health Hub will provide comprehensive primary care to thousands of east-enders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. Speaker, through you, I'm sure that families in my riding will be happy to hear that the Orléans Family Health Hub remains a priority for this government.

In the meantime, families across my riding still need access to timely, high-quality care. Expectant moms, families with young children and folks entering their sunset years—people can experience health challenges at any stage of their life, and they need to know that the care they need will be there when they need it.

Through you, Speaker: Could the minister please speak about what other investments she is making in Ottawa's health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is no question we've made strong investments in Ottawa for people of all ages, starting with newborns and right through to end-of-life.

I was recently delighted to announce that the new midwife-led Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre will soon begin welcoming patients. When fully up and running, the birth centre will assist with about 450 births a year.

Increasing access to primary care has been a priority for our government since day one. Our recruitment and training efforts have attracted more than 550 additional doctors to the Ottawa area. That's a 25% increase since 2003, and 10 family health teams are providing care to almost 140,000 people in the region.

Also, more than 900 long-term-care beds have been or are being built or redeveloped, including 160 redeveloped beds—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —at the Madonna nursing home in Orléans. We'll continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, this week, the ruling that allowed the appeal of convicted killer Michael Rafferty revealed that either Legal Aid Ontario or your ministry will assume the cost of Rafferty's upcoming appeal.

People in my riding and in Ontario are outraged about this, and rightfully so. It is offensive that their tax dollars will pay for the appeal of a convicted child killer. What's

more is that he began his appeal shortly after his conviction, and continued to appeal until he found a sympathetic judge.

While his ability to appeal is an endless, costly process for taxpayers, the real cost is the emotional burden for his victims. I ask: Do you believe that this is justice?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I do appreciate this question, and I realize full well that there's a tremendous amount of emotion involved, particularly on behalf of the victim. But the member should be aware that section 684 of the Criminal Code, which was passed by the federal Parliament—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Federal.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's a federal code, the Criminal Code.

Section 684 of the Criminal Code permits a judge at the Court of Appeal to appoint counsel if the judge thinks it's in the interest of justice for a person to have a lawyer and that person cannot afford one. So it was an order of the judge, in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Code.

Now, in this particular case, if Legal Aid Ontario further refuses to fund counsel for the appellant—and that's up to Legal Aid Ontario—then the Court of Appeal has ordered that those fees and disbursements must be paid by the Ministry of the Attorney General. That is the status. If the member has an issue with respect to that, maybe she should talk to her federal counterpart to change the provisions of the Criminal Code.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, it's so hard for victims of crime to deal with the horrors that they've experienced, and we make it a great deal more difficult when a man who is clearly guilty of this crime can utilize tax dollars to fight the case. How do I explain to my constituents?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, I have some great sympathy with respect to how to explain this to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is warned. Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I quite well understand that it may be very difficult to explain this to the general public, and obviously it's a very emotional issue for all the parties involved, particularly those who have been victimized as a result of the offence. But the reality is that it's up to a judge—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: —who's part of an independent judiciary to determine whether or not he or she wants to apply section 684 of the Criminal Code. If there are issues with respect to that, then I think that representation should be made to the federal government to change the Criminal Code in that regard.

In the meantime, we respect the independence of the judiciary. This has been ordered in this particular case. The matter has been referred to Legal Aid Ontario. Depending upon what they do, the Ministry of the Attorney General may or may not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Fort Erie Race Track officials produced a detailed proposal to build a racing festival around the Chinese calendar's Year of the Horse. The Premier should be aware of the proposal because it was hand-delivered to her. After this government removed the slots from Fort Erie and ignored this racetrack in their recent announcement of support for other racetracks, Fort Erie Race Track officials were told to come up with and submit a plan. Well, they've done that. Chinese new year's is January 31. There is some real urgency here. Will this government support Fort Erie's proposal for the Year of the Horse festival plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I am aware of the plan, and I had the opportunity to meet with one of the people who was very interested in advancing this plan, and in fact exactly what I said needed to happen is happening. The people who are interested in Fort Erie continuing and being sustained are getting together, and they have put together a plan. There's a meeting on Tuesday with the ORC, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and John Snobelen will be at that meeting to look at the plan.

So exactly what I said a number of weeks ago should happen is happening, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, what's not happening is a speedy decision. Every day that this government delays, the horse racing infrastructure around Fort Erie diminishes as farms are sold off and people involved in horse racing move away. The government needs to act now if there is going to be racing in Fort Erie next year.

Instead of responding to the Fort Erie festival proposal, the Premier's office in fact sent an email out to media in Niagara saying the government wants them to produce yet another long-term business plan. This racetrack has produced business plan after business plan after business plan. This government is burying them with paperwork and doesn't seem to get the urgency of the situation.

Will the Premier look seriously at this proposal and respond before December 31 to the Fort Erie Year of the Horse festival plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So there's an idea. I think it's an interesting idea, Mr. Speaker, but there does need to be a business plan. The fact is that the work is not finished yet, and so that work needs to be finished.

1130

As I said, there's a meeting happening on Tuesday. My ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, will do everything we can to support the development of a business plan, to support folks, but they are going to have to complete a business plan. It would be irresponsible for there to be no business plan and for government or for the ORC to adopt that plan.

So we just want to see a business plan. The process is in place. As I said, what we thought should happen is exactly what is happening. I'm very pleased that this idea has come forward and I hope that the business plan will be produced.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Labour. Today, we find that too many new and young workers are unaware of the safety concerns that apply to their own jobs. We find that the accident and the injury rates among new and young workers remain persistently higher than those of older and more experienced workers. As a government I think we all agree we need to do more to ensure that our new and young workers are safe when they go to work in the morning.

So, Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the Ministry of Labour doing to ensure that all workers get the proper training and the tools they need so they can stay safe on the jobs they're working at?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Oakville for asking a very important question on an issue that should be very near and dear to everyone's heart in this Legislature and around the province.

It is extremely important that when people—everyone—go to work, they return home back to their loved ones and to their families. That's why we're really proud that our government has undertaken one of the largest transformations of our health and safety rules and regulations in over 30 years. We'll be making prevention the number one criteria to ensure that our workplaces are safe. As a result of the expert panel's report, led by Mr. Tony Dean, we are in the process of implementing all the recommendations that he outlined. One of those key implementations is to have mandatory awareness training for all workers and supervisors starting July 1, 2014. That training will be in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary,

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm sure the parents and I'm sure that the young people themselves will be very glad to hear of the new initiatives that are being taken to protect young Ontarians, including those on their first jobs. Now, the major change to how we do business is going to require some time. It's going to require extra information. It's going to require conversations with business in order to be implemented in a proper way. I know that business wants to be our partner in this regard.

Speaker, through you to the minister, how will the ministry ensure that employers and businesses have ade-

quate time and the right information so they can adjust and prepare for this new mandatory training?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I mentioned, the mandatory awareness training for all workers and supervisors comes into place on July 1, 2014. In the meantime, we are making sure that workers and employers know what their obligations are. The information for that requirement is already out there. You can get the workbooks for free from ServiceOntario as well as you can do it online at Ontario.ca/labour.

We're also working at making sure that we've got mobile-enabled apps as well for our workers so they can download it. We're making sure that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo, come to order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi:—we've got information available in nine different languages, plus English and French. We're making sure we've got information available for people with low literacy and also for the visually impaired. Again, I ask businesses and workers to start their training now. Let's not wait until July 1, 2014.

I thank all the members for their support for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. We have it on good authority that the Premier and current and former ministers of this government are being haunted by their spirits of Christmas past. They're being reminded of their reckless and irresponsible decisions that wasted precious millions of health care dollars on Ornge and eHealth, drove hydro bills through the roof, drove jobs out of the province and gave us a have-not province. They're being told that the only solution to peace in their lives is restitution. The only restitution that there is, is to bring an end to this government. So will the Premier give the people of Ontario a gift this Christmas season? Will she give them a spring election?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Scrooge is one of my favourite characters, and what Scrooge did was, he learned from those ghosts of Christmas past. He then went on to focus on Christmases yet to come and to make sure that every child and every family in his circle, Mr. Speaker—that Tiny Tim had a future.

Our goal, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I didn't get the "Tim" thing there.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Indeed, I want everyone in this House to have a bright future. But, more specific-

ally, we want to make the investment that will ensure that the people of Ontario have a bright future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, you see, Speaker, the Premier got one step ahead of me on the "Tim" part of this, because where we were going with this is that if the Premier and her ministers want peace in their hearts, then she should give the people of Ontario an election so that Tim can in fact give the people of this province all of the things that they need: a strong economy, a good future, prosperity in the future. That's our request of the Premier. Premier, will you give the people of this province an election in the spring?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I appreciate the warmth and the goodwill in the delivery of that question, Mr. Speaker. What I will commit to this House is that, as I said during the leadership, and as I have said for the last 10 months, we will continue to make this minority Parliament work, but if and when it's time to go to a general election, I am ready to do that.

But I believe our responsibility is to focus on the future, to make the investments in people and in infrastructure and a business climate that works. We would love to have the opposition work with us on Bill 105 so we could support small businesses in the province, and I look forward to those futures and working with them in the minority government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Good morning, Minister. Minister, we have another problem with the girders on the Herb Gray Parkway. Freyssinet, the company that built most of the deficient girders, has not been paying its bills. Local suppliers, the little guys, have been hung out to dry. One company in particular is owed \$116,387.64. The banks are calling several times a day.

Let me borrow a couple of lines from the Premier's running commercial: I'll speak simply and get to the point. Will the minister set as a goal to do everything in his power to see that these bills are paid, and paid today?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to wish him not only good morning but merry Christmas to my friends. I also want to thank all my critics; I think I have more than any other minister. There are seven of you, but, all of you, I wish you much joy and health.

I will gladly answer the question and wish you the Christmas spirit as well. We are working very hard on that right now, my colleague from Windsor West and yourself. We are looking at a number of remedies.

There is a requirement now in the revised agreement that all of these companies must be current in their payments. I have suggested to you privately two or three

approaches that we could take, so I am quite optimistic we will do this.

Most companies are being paid. There is one company, which is now involved in some litigation as a result of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: On a point of order: On behalf of all small businesses in Ontario, our job creators, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice on Bill 105. Do we agree? I heard a no.

The leader of the third party on a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

I will recognize the leader of the third party on a point of order.

NELSON MANDELA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Nelson Mandela and the Toronto Transit Commission.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Nelson Mandela and the Toronto Transit Commission. Do we agree? Agreed.

The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that, should the Scarborough subway be extended, the Legislative Assembly recommend to the board of commissioners overseeing the Toronto Transit Commission that the first subway stop be named Nelson Mandela Station.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Horwath moves that, should the Scarborough subway be extended, the Legislative Assembly recommend to the board of commissioners—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would seek your indulgence, because you'd like to hear this to ensure you know what you're voting on—overseeing the Toronto Transit Commission that the first subway stop be named Nelson Mandela Station. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: If I may, Mr. Speaker, I just want to use this opportunity to thank everyone in the Legislature for the very strong support you all gave me over the last year with my journey with cancer. I feel great. I love you all. I'm feeling wonderful.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year. Thank you.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, on behalf of all Ontario seniors, I want to wish you and every member of the House a very Merry Christmas, a joyeux Noël, a very happy holiday season and a 2014 that will find us all

back here. We hope to have health, happiness, joy and no election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to take a moment, with your indulgence, to thank everyone for the very, very hard work that they do. Contrary to what all of us know is said from time to time, I know there will be a lot of work done in your constituencies. Your tireless efforts are noticed and appreciated.

On a personal note, if I were to be the person who was responsible for giving out lumps of coal, I would not do that to this group of people. It's a fascinating one hour in our lives.

I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas, season's greetings and a healthy and prosperous new year.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A point of order, Mr. Speaker: In light of this warmth that we now feel in this Legislature, I would seek unanimous consent to move a motion in order to extend the sitting of the House into next week.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's serious stuff. I have to do my job.

The member from Timmins—James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice regarding sittings. Do we agree? I did hear a no.

There are no deferred votes.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.—sorry, I was in the middle of it. I don't stop.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature our legislative learner Aysa Mowtha Pollock, who has been an excellent support for our NDP caucus and to my office. Thank you very much, Aysa, for your hard work for us.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce some of the executive and actors from ACTRA that are here: Theresa Tova, Lisa Blanchette, Sue Milling, Karl Pruner, David Sparrow and Art Hindle. If I missed anyone, I'm sorry.

From Equity: Arden Ryshpan and Jeremy Civiero.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. I had to discipline them earlier.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PENSION HEARINGS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: On July 28, 2011, the closure of Navistar in Chatham was finalized, causing over 1,000 workers to lose their jobs. Since that day, there have been ongoing pension disputes between Navistar and the workers' union, Unifor Locals 127 and 35. Recently,

Navistar appealed a FSCO pension decision, which has caused families to wait even longer for resolution.

Workers were recently surprised by the cancellation of hearings scheduled for December 9, 11, 12 and 16. Constituents, many of whom are former Navistar workers anxiously awaiting a decision are justifiably concerned. I've received many calls at my Chatham office from outraged workers.

Finance Minister Sousa has apologized for the delay and has stated that the hearings will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

What was hoped to have been a merry Christmas, finally, for the affected families—who, by the way, have been forced to deeply dip into their savings in order to pay their bills.

Speaker, I've been advocating for these employees and their families since I've been in office, and I will continue to do so. It's my sincere hope that this matter will be resolved as soon as possible, allowing families in Chatham to move forward.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: Lost in the ongoing nightmare at city hall is the latest announcement from the TTC that transit fares in Toronto are going up again. While we might be distracted by the train wreck in the mayor's office, none of us can miss the fact that transit policy in this city continues to leave riders behind.

Because we no longer have a fair cost-sharing model in Ontario, Toronto riders are once again being asked to pay more for increasingly overcrowded and insufficient service.

I'm certainly happy that after so many years of neglect, politicians have finally begun to focus on the need for transit investment. But even as our governments continue to make new plans, break contracts, strike panels and commission reports, and as much as they prefer to announce big, flashy capital projects, like the new subway in Scarborough or the new air-rail link, our existing transit systems around the province need government support to increase operating capacity and get our cities moving again.

This could be happening even while more expert panels meet, roads are dug up and subways are built. Transit riders from across the province would benefit today from more affordable fares and seeing more vehicles on transit routes. In fact, TTC CEO Andy Byford today said that returning the old 50% operating subsidy to municipalities should be the number one transit priority for the province.

Transit experts across the province know that proper provincial operating subsidies would help transit riders today. This isn't even contentious, Speaker, so let's get this province moving today.

MATTHEW MILLER

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I recently learned of a gifted young musician: Matthew Miller from Richmond Hill, in

my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. 11-year-old Matthew's talents have been recognized with a prestigious honour. His composition, *Go Christmas*, placed first in the "Child, 10 to 12 years" category of the Amadeus Choir's annual seasonal songwriting competition. As a result of his first-place finish, the Amadeus Choir of Toronto will perform *Go Christmas* this weekend at their Sing with the Angels concert, a tribute to the Ontario Arts Council's 50th anniversary.

As you may know, the Amadeus Choir has won the CBC's biennial choral competition numerous times, and their seasonal songwriting contest attracts entrants from all over the world. In fact, this year's contest winners and honourable mentions include entries from as far away as New Zealand.

Matthew began taking piano lessons at the age of four, and by the age of six he was singing with the Richmond Hill United Church choir. While he has received honourable mentions for his compositions in the past, *Go Christmas* is his first of what I'm sure will be many first-place finishes. Congratulations, Matthew.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish everyone here at Queen's Park and in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham a wonderful and safe holiday season.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS IN DURHAM

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to bring greetings to everyone, not just here but throughout Ontario, and to wish them season's greetings and, of course, merry Christmas.

In my riding of Durham, there are many events, old and new, to celebrate the holiday season, from the 52nd annual Bowmanville Santa Claus Parade on November 16—and I thank Terry Tzikas, chair of the Bowmanville Santa Claus Parade, and all who participated—to the first annual Courtice Santa Claus Parade on December 1. Congratulations to Dale Gibbons and all his volunteers. I also want to thank my good friend from Roy Nichols Chev in Courtice, Gary Dalby, who drove me in the parade, and Bob Owen, the owner of Roy Nichols.

The annual tree-lighting in historic downtown Bowmanville on December 6 featured horse-drawn rides in the community, carolers and other special events. I want to thank Terri and Rick Johnson, who provided the entertainment for the children and for thousands of people. Thanks to the Boots and Hearts Music Festival, from the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, for presenting a cheque for \$10,000 to the Bowmanville Hospital Foundation at the tree-lighting ceremony.

A number of events are coming later this month all through until January, including *The Animal's Gift* at the Bowmanville Zoo. There's also the Living Nativity at Uxbridge Baptist Church in Centennial Park—upwards of 4,000 people participate in this—as well as the nativity scene at St. Therese church in Courtice.

I'm proud to say that the list of special events for Christmas is much longer, from food drives and toy

drives, as well as the Knights of Columbus Council 6361's Keep Christ in Christmas demonstration.

The Christmas spirit and the community spirit are alive and well in Durham.

A merry Christmas and season's greetings to all, and best wishes in the new year for all.

CHARLIE DIEMER

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is truly my honour to rise today to pay tribute to someone from my riding who was a true pioneer in the agriculture community and indeed across the nation. Charlie Diemer—one of the very few farmers inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame—will be remembered this Friday at his funeral in Essex. The well-known Woodslee dairy farmer died on Sunday at the age of 94.

"He was a great leader, a great innovator, a great forward thinker and a great community man," said Kingsville dairy farmer Bernard Nelson. "What bigger compliment can you give a person than to be somebody that looks after his fellow man, and he certainly did that."

Diemer saw the suffering of farmers, including those who had lost their farms after the Great Depression, and helped start the Woodslee Credit Union, which was run out of a cash box at his house.

He was involved in a number of co-operatives, including the Essex County Medical Co-operative that helped farmers with health care costs before OHIP was even conceived. For his role in the co-operative movement, Diemer was inducted into the hall of fame in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, there wasn't a campaign that didn't involve a stop-off at the Diemer farm to consult with Charlie, to seek his counsel and his advice. I certainly had that opportunity many times. He meant so much to agriculture in our community.

I want to thank his family and his friends for sharing him with us for so long. He was someone who was certainly inspirational to me and to many others in our community, and we thank him. Our province is indeed a better place for having had Charlie Diemer in it.

1310

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Speaker, retirement benefits, pensions, living well and adequately in one's golden years: These are important issues and, of course, that's why I rise today to speak about this crucial issue of strengthening Ontario's pension system.

As members of this Legislature are well aware, there's significant evidence, with the demographic shift and the greying of the country, that many people could face inadequate retirement savings due to this aging population with, by the way, increasing life expectancy and, as well, declining coverage in traditional pension plans.

In my own riding of Etobicoke North, I hear from constituents directly about what they feel is a very important issue for their future years: pension security and planning for retirement. The Ontario Liberal government,

of course, therefore, is attempting to address these important issues.

In the 2013 fall economic statement just a few weeks ago, Finance Minister Sousa announced a plan to strengthen retirement income, and there are three issues that are being dealt with directly: enhancing the Canada Pension Plan and introducing retirement savings tools like pooled registration pension plans, and targeting benefit plans for those without workplace pensions; as well, reducing costs and improving financial literacy for those with self-directed savings; and also working with Ontario's defined benefit pension plan administrators.

Part of this commitment of the Wynne government is, of course, to offer open and accessible government. We look forward to working with all parties in this endeavour.

CONSIDERATION OF BILLS 88 AND 105

Mr. Rod Jackson: Before I get into my main statement, I just want to wish my grandmother a happy 89th birthday. She's quite a woman, and she certainly has lots of life left in her and is very spry and opinionated. I was able to switch her from being a Liberal to being a Conservative.

Interjections.

Mr. Rod Jackson: That wasn't that controversial, was it?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't heckle your grandmother.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Oh, she understands.

I just want to mention something today. I was very proud to have Bill 88 go through committee yesterday. The government was there and had some very interesting ideas about what should happen there and some concerns they had. I was really proud to see us work together to be able to make that bill go through and be able to, I think, allay any concerns and fears that may have been there from stakeholders or the government.

I know today that Bill 88, along with Bill 105, are going to come for unanimous consent. We've also got some concerns about Bill 105. It's a good bill, but it needs some work. We're hoping that those concerns can be, in good faith—like we operated yesterday in committee—dealt with, and actually see some work done here today, some movement by the government. We can actually get these two bills together, do the right thing for the people of Ontario and make them law.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Mr. Bob Delaney: A merry Christmas to you, Speaker.

It was the sitting before Christmas, and amid the glad tidings,

The members prepared to return to their ridings.

The echoes of speeches are fading to black,

It's two months from now 'til members are back.

No critics, no scrums, no clippings to read,

It's back to our families, our affections they need.

It's time to forget the political rifts,

And join with our neighbours to cherish our gifts.
So back to the ridings our members will go
To see the good folks across Ontario.
Shake hands with them all, from far and from near,
Wish one and all the best for next year.
And to all whose opinions are left, centre or right,
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Bah, humbug.

Members's statements? The member for Leeds–Grenville.

PROCTER AND GAMBLE

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. Merry Christmas to you and your family.

On the last day the House sits in 2013, I rise on behalf of everyone in Leeds–Grenville to wish the entire team at Procter and Gamble in Brockville an early happy anniversary. In 2014, this great company marks 35 years since it broke ground at its manufacturing facility on California Avenue. From the moment the first product rolled off the line in 1980, Procter and Gamble has been so much more than the largest corporate employer in the city of Brockville.

P&G and its 600 employees have demonstrated a remarkable commitment to improve the lives of others in our community. They have selflessly given millions of dollars in donations as well as countless hours of their time to support charitable organizations.

Their incredible dedication to the annual United Way of Leeds–Grenville campaign is just one example of the culture of caring at Procter and Gamble. Last year, the P&G Brockville team raised more than \$250,000. That was one quarter of the United Way's \$1-million goal. On Tuesday, we're all anticipating more great news when the plant unveils this year's total, which hopefully again will put United Way over the \$1-million mark.

This dedication to philanthropy reflects P&G's corporate commitment to ensuring the communities in which their facilities operate prosper as a result of that relationship. That has certainly been the case in Brockville.

I'm looking forward to celebrating this milestone with P&G and their team next year, and hopefully for many years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act; Bill 58, An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day; and Bill 88, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older. This will be the fifth time we've tried to pass Bill 105.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? I heard a no.

Government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? I heard a no.

The member from Beaches–East York on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Prue: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 49, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? I heard a no.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I move to reports by committees, I'm going to take some liberty. This morning, I wished all members well and made comment to all of them. This afternoon, with your permission, I'd like to say merry Christmas, season's greetings and a very large thank you to all the hard-working staff at the Legislature. We all know that these men and women work tirelessly for us behind the scenes and sometimes do not get the notice. I think today would be a good day to do that.

I also want to say thank you to each of your staffs in your constituency offices, who put up with the front-line work on your behalf.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for allowing me to do that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They are the unsung heroes of the assembly, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's why I'm standing.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 71, An Act to protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry / *Projet de loi 71, Loi visant à protéger les enfants artistes dans l'industrie du spectacle vivant et l'industrie du spectacle enregistré.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 71, An Act to

protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? I heard a no.

1320

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RETAIL SALES TAX AMENDMENT ACT (HST REBATE FOR HOME HEATING), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL (REMBOURSEMENT DE LA TVH POUR LE CHAUFFAGE DOMESTIQUE)

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate of the Ontario portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax in respect of certain home heating costs / Projet de loi 154, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour prévoir un remboursement de la composante ontarienne de la taxe de vente harmonisée à l'égard de certains frais de chauffage domestique.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, 'tis the season to be giving, and it would be a nice early Christmas present.

The bill amends the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate in respect of the Ontario portion of the harmonized sales tax for the supply of home heating energy sources, home heating equipment and home heating services. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is given the authority to make regulations prescribing the energy sources, equipment and services in respect of which the rebate applies.

The bill provides that the rebate is available only if the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement between Ontario and Canada is amended accordingly.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (PREMIUM RATES FOR DEEMED WORKERS IN CONSTRUCTION), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (TAUX DES PRIMES POUR LES PERSONNES RÉPUTÉES ÊTRE DES TRAVAILLEURS DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Mrs. Albanese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to premium rates for persons who are deemed to be workers in the construction industry / Projet de loi 155, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail à l'égard du taux des primes pour les personnes réputées être des travailleurs de l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: The bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. The amendments provide that the rate used to calculate the premium to be paid by employers in the construction industry in respect of independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in partnerships and executive officers of corporations must be one third of the rate used to calculate the premium to be paid in respect of workers. This requirement applies for a five-year period, following which the rate must meet any requirements prescribed by regulations.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would be remiss not to thank some of the members, who pointed out that the one thing I forgot to do—and I acknowledge my mistake—is to thank these wonderful pages, who have worked so hard. Nice job. There you go.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been told by the pages that they want to stay here until December 24.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, no.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Agreed. Agreed. Absolutely.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Without question period.

Anyway, thank you very much, pages. We appreciate it.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, as requested by the committee itself, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet for up to three days during the winter adjournment for purposes of conducting one day of public hearings and up to two days of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 122, such days to be determined by the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's a UC?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, sorry. There's an explanation; I called for motions.

So do we agree to the unanimous consent of the introduction? I heard a no.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For those who got me to doubt myself, you're wrong. I was right. This is a motion.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, they ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1327 to 1357.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members take their seats, please?

Mr. Milloy moves that, as requested by the committee, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet for up to three days during the winter adjournment for purposes of conducting one day of public hearings and up to two days of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 122, such days to be determined by the committee.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Fraser, John	Natyshak, Taras
Balkissoon, Bas	Hatfield, Percy	Piruzza, Teresa
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Hunter, Miltie	Qaaddi, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sattler, Peggy
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Fife, Catherine	Milloy, John	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Holyday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia	
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 55; the nays are 31.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm going to try this again, Speaker, for the sake of children. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 71, An Act to protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is seeing unanimous consent to put a motion without notice on his private member's bill. Do we agree? I heard a no.

SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order I wanted to try to make earlier today, but you were already dismissing the morning session of the Legislature, I wanted to muse a bit about the mace. I was noticing the beauty of the diamonds in the mace, and I was reminded that diamonds are really chunks of coal that have handled stress exceptionally well. And I think, sir, that would describe you and the role that you played here over this last session. I want to thank you for being our diamond in the rough and for getting us through this past session.

Applause.

AMANDA PHILP AND JACQUI DELANEY

Mr. Frank Klees: A point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. Apart from wanting to agree with my colleague on your contribution and wherever you came from—the coal into a diamond, whatever that means—we don't often enough recognize the people who make a contribution in this place. I want to recognize two people this afternoon. One is Amanda Philp, who is the director of strategy for us, and the other is Jacqui Delaney, who is the press secretary to the leader of the official opposition. Both of these individuals are in training to provide the same services to the next Premier of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As much as I respect this and thank all the members for their comments, we need to keep things moving along. Motions.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and that in the case of any division, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet for up to eight days during the winter adjournment

for the purpose of conducting pre-budget consultations, such days and locations to be determined by the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet for up to eight days during the winter adjournment for the purpose of conducting pre-budget consultations, such days and locations to be determined by the committee. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 midnight tonight, Thursday, December 12, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 midnight tonight, Thursday, December 12, 2013. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1406 to 1411.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members take their seats, please.

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 39. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fraser, John	Milloy, John
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hunter, Mitzie	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadi, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Leone, Rob	Sattler, Peggy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Schein, Jonah
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Singh, Jagmeet
Elliott, Christine	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras	
Holiday, Douglas C.	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 31; the nays are 48.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Thursday, December 12, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I need to do this so it can be heard.

Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 31; the nays are 48.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order for the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: For the third time, for the sake of children in our province, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 71, An Act to protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry—and have the guts to stand up when you say "no."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek should know the rules. If he does know the rules, he's not saying it properly, and I don't like it.

Unanimous consent has been sought to put a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I move that the order for third reading of Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, immediately be called and that the question shall be put immediately without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

SUPPORTING SMALL
BUSINESSES ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR
LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Sandals, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ALEX BEDUZ

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, there's an individual who sits to your left under the press gallery who has made a tremendous contribution to the functioning of this Legislature. His name is Alex Beduz. He's the senior legislative adviser to the leader of the official opposition. I want to recognize Alex for his contribution, and I want the people here to know that he's in training for that same position for the next Premier of the province.

RAMIRO MORA

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, as you know, New Democrats are always frugal in how we spend the money of the people of Ontario. I just want to thank my large House leader's team. Ramiro, take a bow.

1420

HOUSE OFFICERS AND TABLE STAFF

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I want to also bring attention to—in the spirit of Christmas—since you have been so much honoured for conducting our meetings so straightforwardly, I should say, I think it goes the same for the wonderful work and contributions that our Deputy Speakers have made to the House.

To you, Speaker, and all the Deputy Speakers, for putting up with us during the most raucous session of this Parliament—and the Clerks as well, of course—merry Christmas.

Applause.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I guess I have the honour of doing the last statement for the year. Thank you for that.

I do want to say that one of the most rewarding parts about being the Minister of Consumer Services is the job

of informing and protecting Ontario consumers in so many different areas of their day-to-day lives. As we enter the holiday season, this work, indeed, carries on.

I've spoken here in the past about the role of ensuring that people in this province have easy-to-understand cellphone and wireless contracts, protection against dishonest door-to-door water heater salespersons and measures to protect people who use debt settlement services. I've also talked about our efforts to develop a new legislative framework for condominiums that is up to date and relevant.

So it's a pleasure to rise in this House today to tell you about two other important ways we're helping people make smart consumer choices during the holidays: by educating consumers on how to use gift cards wisely and informing them about how to stay safe from electrical hazards when buying and installing holiday lights and decorations.

As we know, Speaker, people love to give gift cards and receive them this time of the year. Canadians spend nearly \$2 billion every year on them. In fact, I just recently came back from the Ontario public service toy drive and I noticed that many gift cards were donated by OPS staffers, ministers' offices and so on to help young teens and children during the holiday season.

When it comes to giving and receiving those gift cards, there are a few important things to remember. Consumers need to know, first and foremost, that from a security perspective, these items need to be treated the same way as cash. Keeping \$50 in cash in a safe place just makes good sense, and the same thing goes for \$50 gift cards. As well, like any purchase, keeping a receipt for a gift card is recommended as a guarantee of the card's value. It's also important for consumers to read the terms and conditions before buying a card. For example, is there an activation fee? If your dentist or the brother-in-law you give a card to suddenly finds out there's a surprise fee on a gift card, it wouldn't be so good. I think you would agree, Speaker.

Consumers should also remember that retailers are not permitted by law to charge HST when selling a gift card. When you're buying a \$20, \$25 or \$50 gift card, for example, that's what the gift card should cost and no more.

Finally, as we remind Ontario consumers every year, most gift cards cannot come with expiration dates; that's something this government introduced. There are only two exceptions to this rule: One is that cards bought for use at malls—and my teens love to go to malls; we have lots of these in my house—as opposed to individual retailer cards, can come with a one-time activation fee. They also start to lose their value after 15 months.

The other exception is prepaid credit cards. These can come with an expiry date, as they're federally regulated. The federal government is following our government's lead and has announced new rules that will come into effect in May that will bring an end to expiry dates for prepaid credit cards. But until then, consumers should read the fine print when they are purchasing one.

Those are just a few of the helpful tips we have put together to help Ontarians negotiate the sometimes

complicated world of gift cards. There are many more tips on our website, which is Ontario.ca/consumer.

Speaker, when it comes to the smart purchase and safe use of electrical lights and other devices for holiday decorating, my ministry continues to work closely with our partners at the Electrical Safety Authority. At this time of year, an evening walk through a neighbourhood or an evening drive in the country reveals a host of creative electrical decorations both inside and outside homes. There's no doubt holiday decorating is a cherished tradition for many Ontarians. With that in mind, there are many tips and information that we are passing on to consumers to help them stay safe for the holiday season. Make sure that decorations carry an authorized rating. Do not overload extension cords and replace damaged lights or electrical decorations, and always check the manufacturer's instructions before use.

It's important to remember that lights can still be a hazard when people are not around, so before going to bed or any time you leave your house, we suggest people turn off lights or unplug them. That includes the electrical decorations.

When the season comes to an end, it's important to remove lights and decorations and store them until next year so they remain safe and in working order.

These tips and many others are available online with the Electrical Safety Authority, at www.esasafe.com.

Educating and protecting Ontario consumers is part of the government's economic plan to invest in people, build modern infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate. By ensuring that Ontarians are able to spend their hard-earned money wisely when purchasing and receiving gift cards and educating them on staying safe from electrical hazards when decorating, we're helping everyone enjoy a happy holiday.

And may I say happy holiday to everyone here in the Legislature and to all Ontarians across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? It's now time for responses.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I just wanted to mention, hearing this statement from the minister and the Wynne government, you might assume that Christmas is only about lights and holiday shopping, and that Christmas is all about cash registers and the commercialization of the Christmas holidays.

Of course, over the decades, we have seen a continued secularization of Christmas. It's a trend that really goes back to the 1800s. We see more pressure to shop—midnight madness replacing midnight mass, Frosty the Snowman replacing O Holy Night; even in this statement, the word “holiday” replacing “Christmas.” Peace on earth is being replaced with advertising hoopla and Christmas lights and crowded stores and mall parking lots, and of course, for so many people, this is all about Christmas, even though every child knows that it's Santa Claus who actually brings the gifts.

By and large, I think we all agree that government does have a bit of a role, an advisory role and a regulatory role, with respect to electrical safety and with respect to times when money changes hands or warran-

ties are offered or gift cards are purchased. I do remind this government to remember that there is something else to celebrate over Christmas beyond shopping and bright lights, just as there recently was over Hanukkah.

By all means, when shopping, consider moderation, watch your credit card balance and particularly those high interest rates. Be careful of accessing a payday loan. Check out the warranty on items purchased. Save all your receipts.

Know who you're dealing with if you're shopping online; do the research, and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Use a credit card or an online payment system. Use PayPal or other online payment services, because these websites do keep personal card information stored on a secure site. I'm told that using debit cards may not be as secure using that technology.

Be careful when using mobile applications. Make sure you use only well-evaluated apps that are used by a lot of people. Some shopping apps are malware, which could steal your personal information. Secure your computer, your mobile devices. The application software and the operating systems on your computer and mobile devices must be up to date. This goes for anti-spyware, for example. Always read the fine print when you're shopping on the Internet. Understand your shipping charges.

1430

Always read the terms before purchasing a gift card. What are the fees? Are they transparent? I know the minister walked through a fair bit of information on gift cards—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Forgive me. Please be seated. Sorry for the interruption.

Pursuant to standing order 30(c), I interrupt routine proceedings and call orders of the day.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Wellington—Halton Hills on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to seek unanimous consent of the House. Given the fact that this is the last day of the sitting and possibly the last day of the Parliament—we don't know—I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow us to have 15 minutes for petitions, as we normally would do every afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington—Halton Hills is seeking unanimous consent to allow us, after 2:30, to finish petitions in a regular 15-minute rotation. Do we agree? I heard a no.

It is now time for orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PAVED SHOULDER CONSTRUCTION AND BICYCLING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CONSTRUCTION D'ACCOTEMENTS STABILISÉS ET LA CIRCULATION DES BICYCLETTES

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and the Highway Traffic Act to construct paved shoulders and permit bicycles to ride on them / Projet de loi 137, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun et le Code de la route pour construire des accotements stabilisés et permettre aux bicyclettes d'y circuler.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norm Miller: Let me begin by thanking my very competent legislative intern, Emily Barrette, who has done a lot of the research for this private member's bill and, in fact, wrote a lot of the speech I'm about to give. Thank you to Emily. She's doing a great job.

I'm pleased to rise today to debate my private member's bill, Bill 137, the Paved Shoulder Construction and Bicycling Act. This is my third time introducing this legislation, and it passed second reading back in 2010, so I'm hopeful that it will pass again today. The idea for this bill came from calls I was receiving from constituents in my riding. Usually when a road construction project was going on in their neighbourhood, they would see roads being repaved and resurfaced and wanted the shoulders paved as well. There are many reasons for people wanting paved shoulders, which I will get into a little bit later, but I first want to talk about what this bill seeks to accomplish and the changes it seeks to make.

Bill 137 calls for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincial highways when those roads are being paved or resurfaced. The legislation maintains the transportation minister's power to make exemptions where they see fit and also does not change existing regulations that prohibit cyclists from riding on controlled-access highways; for example, the 400-series highways.

This bill also differs from previous versions that I introduced in that it also calls for an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act. It came to my attention in the first meeting of the all-party cycling caucus, with my colleagues the members from Kitchener–Waterloo and Eglinton–Lawrence, that under the current legislation, it is actually illegal for cyclists to ride on the shoulder portion of the highway. So Bill 137 includes an amendment that would make it legal for cyclists to ride on paved shoulders. I should mention that this is already common practice across the province and that this law goes widely unenforced. However, I think it is important to make this practice legal, which is what this amendment seeks to accomplish.

Now I want to talk about the benefits that this bill will have and the varying widespread benefits, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, active transportation and health benefits: I think we can all agree that promoting active transportation benefits individuals and society as a whole. By creating paved shoulders alongside our provincial roadways, we would be providing more opportunities for individuals to safely cycle, run or walk around this prov-

ince. Many people express reservations about cycling out of fear for their personal safety, which is a result of lack of infrastructure that supports active transportation and outdoor activities. Some 69% of Ontarians have said they would like to cycle more, up from 53% in 2011. That's a 16% increase over two years ago. We need to do more to encourage individuals to exercise and take up active transportation, and it is my belief that my bill will help do that.

Another thing that I want to bring up is the savings in health care costs that can be reaped by promoting active transportation. I think, at this point, we can agree on the importance of encouraging healthy and active lifestyles as a way of reducing health care costs in the long term.

Just to give you an idea of the savings to be had, a Canadian study calculated that physical inactivity alone is directly associated with \$1.6 billion in annual health care costs in Canada, or 1.5% of all Canadian health care costs. Each additional 10% increase in physical activity in Canada would translate to an annual direct health care savings of up to \$150 million. That's according to the Canadian Medical Association. Across Canada, physical inactivity is estimated to cost \$3.7 billion in economic productivity loss due to its role in a number of different diseases, including diabetes. Together, inactivity and obesity are estimated to account for \$6.4 billion in lost economic output due to short- and long-term disability and premature death. At an individual level, a US study found that inactive individuals incur over \$600 in additional health care costs per year as compared to active individuals. So it's clear, from a health and cost perspective, that there are benefits to be gained from creating more opportunities for individuals to participate in physical activities throughout the province.

The next point I'd like to make is on public safety. Bill 137 will also increase public safety for all road users. One hundred and twenty-nine cyclists died in Ontario between 2006 and 2010. According to the Ministry of Transportation, in 2010, 2,087 cyclists were injured, and that's only in reportable collisions. That number, in reality, is probably much higher. The chief coroner of Ontario published a cycling death review in 2012 which recommended, among other things, "The Ministry of Transportation should identify the development of paved shoulders on provincial highways as a high-priority initiative."

Other jurisdictions have looked into the effects of paved shoulders on reducing fatalities. An Australian study found that fatal crash rates were 60% to 70% less on roads with paved shoulders. A study by the Minnesota department of transportation found that two-lane roadways with paved shoulders at least four feet wide reduced single-vehicle and total crashes by up to 15%. When we're talking about public safety, I'm not just talking about safety for cyclists or pedestrians or motorists, but for all these groups. This is why I have the support of groups like the Canadian Automobile Association for my bill. Paved shoulders make our highways safer for all users.

Let me talk about the cost-effectiveness of paved shoulders. I sometimes hear concerns about paved shoulders being costly. In fact, paved shoulders reduce road maintenance costs over time. Soft gravel shoulders are more prone to washouts and cracking at the edge of the roadway and require more maintenance.

An Iowa study showed that maintenance cost savings for paved versus granular shoulders totalled approximately \$7,320 per mile over 20 years. If you take into account other factors such as health benefits and tourism, there are even more economic benefits to be gained.

In fact, studies estimate that local highway cycling infrastructure projects have a cost benefit of 1-to-4 to 1-to-5, meaning that for every dollar spent, we save between \$4 to \$5. I want to point this out, because in response to my press conference on Monday, ministry officials disputed that paved shoulders were more cost-effective over time and suggested that the upfront costs of paving provincial shoulders represented a stumbling block.

I'm not suggesting, and Bill 137 does not call for it, that the province go out and pave every shoulder tomorrow. The paving would only take place when a road is being repaved or resurfaced. Paved highways have a lifespan of approximately 18 years, so the shoulder-paving in Ontario would take place gradually over that time period.

Finally, there is substantial evidence to suggest that paved shoulders are more cost-effective than gravel shoulders. This is substantiated by the fact that numerous municipalities have already chosen to pave the shoulders of their roads. The Ontario Road Builders' Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association have also both supported paved shoulders, as well as supporting the claim that they are more cost-effective.

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The next point I'd like to make is the tourism benefits—especially representing an area such as Parry Sound–Muskoka, known for its tourism. Another area where we would see financial benefits from paved shoulders is the tourism industry. Ontario has 13,000 kilometres of cycling routes and trails, 8,000 of which are on roads. In 2010, Canadian visitors who cycled while travelling in Ontario numbered two million. These visitors spent \$391 million, an increase of 18% in the last few years. It is clear that cycling tourism is a growing and important part of the tourism industry in Ontario. However, we can do much more.

Other jurisdictions are miles ahead—no pun intended—with paved shoulders and cycling infrastructure to promote tourism. Just next door in Quebec, the government invested \$88.5 million over 10 years in the planning and construction of Route verte, a more than 4,000-kilometre bikeway linking all parts of Quebec. In 2000, Route verte cyclists spent a total of \$95.4 million, and in 2006, an estimated \$134 million.

These numbers indicate that the economic benefits from tourism greatly outweigh the initial investment costs in cycling infrastructure. I'd point out that Route

verte is also used for uses other than cycling. In fact, a big part of Route verte is a snowmobile trail in the wintertime. It's a big part of Quebec's snowmobile trail system.

Another example is North Carolina, where public funds were invested to create multi-use pathways and paved shoulders for bicycles. The state saw a 900% return on the investment. Tourists spend almost \$60 million annually in restaurants and retail and lodging businesses.

To give you some indication of the importance of tourism in Ontario, I want to cite a report from the Niagara region. They found that in 2002, bicycle tourists spent \$164 million, representing 12% of total tourism expenditure and fuelling almost 5,000 jobs. Restaurant, retail and lodging establishments received the biggest benefit. Cycling tourists are also known to stay longer and spend more money than non-cycling tourists on a daily basis. Furthermore, their tourist dollars go to small and local businesses. The important economic benefits these tourists bring to Ontario could be increased with paved shoulders.

Since I last debated this bill, the government released its cycling strategy for the province. Paved shoulders and greater biking infrastructure province-wide were recommended. Now is the time to move forward on this matter. I urge the government and the third party to consider taking action today. It will have multiple benefits for Ontario: for tourism, for the economy, for public safety and for healthier Ontarians.

I wanted to end by saying that this bill has received support from numerous organizations, including the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Ontario Safety League, the Canadian Automobile Association, Share the Road Cycling Coalition, Cycle Toronto and the Ontario Provincial Police. I especially want to thank Eleanor McMahon, the CEO and founder of Share the Road Cycling Coalition, and Teresa Di Felice, of the Canadian Automobile Association, for their support of this bill.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the all-party cycling caucus for committing to work across party lines to move forward on cycling issues in the province. I hope we can come to an agreement today and move forward with this bill. With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to my private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today and speak to this bill on behalf of my constituents in Davenport. I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for introducing Bill 137.

We believe this is a good bill. It's a bill that moves the province forward in the right direction, and it's a bill that we'll support. We need to build streets and highways for cars, obviously, but more and more, people across Ontario understand that we need to build streets and roads for people—people in cars, yes, but people who walk and run and bicycle.

I also want to take a moment to thank Eleanor McMahon and Share the Road for supporting cycling in Ontario. Eleanor has turned a tragic day in her life into a lifetime of optimism and advocacy. All of us in this House admire her for her work, and we thank her.

I want people in this House to remember being a kid, to think about being nine or 10 years old and what it felt like on that day. Maybe it was a day during March break, a day when school was out, when the snow was off the ground, and it was the first day that you were able to take your bicycle out of storage for the winter and go for a ride. That first day meant freedom to us. After a long winter, I can remember how great it felt to be back on a bicycle.

At some point as an adult, I refused to give up my bicycle in the winter and I decided to ride all year round. Most studies now show, though, that people in Ontario are afraid for their safety when they ride, and that stops people from being active and taking their bicycles out.

Together, we can make this a safer province and one that will encourage more people to cycle, and this bill is part of the solution. But there's far more that we must do as legislators. I've discussed many of these things before in this House. We should move to have truck guards on trucks. We need a one-metre passing rule. We need investments in cycling infrastructure, like bike lanes. That's why I've worked with Cycle Toronto and cycling activists to push the provincial government to clarify the contraflow lanes that are now allowed in our cities. I'm very happy to say that the Shaw contraflow lane in Toronto is now going ahead.

It's time to share the road, and it's time to respect cyclists. We need to properly support education for drivers and cyclists. We need to recognize that when a cyclist is hit by a car door, it is in fact a traffic collision. We need to remember the names and the families who have lost loved ones; people like Greg Stobbert, Galen Kuellmer, Jenna Morrison, Tom Samson. These are people who have touched our lives. We have to ensure their loss and their love for their bicycles is turned into a politics of inclusion that will build great communities where people of all ages can feel like kids on their bikes in spring.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 137, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act—introduced by the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I'd like to begin by saying I really, truly support the intent of this bill, to promote cycling. This is something that I'm personally committed to. This is also something that this government is committed to. However, it is a little challenging to support the bill in its current form. Again, it's not that I don't support the idea or elements of the bill, but there are elements of the bill that are problematic. I'm going to go through some of those.

Number one is the estimated cost. As proposed by this bill, it would be around \$2.3 billion. Now, I did hear the

MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka say that in the long run it's cheaper to do it that way. It may well be so, but if we are going to do it, we need a plan to fund it, and this bill does not speak to it. I understand the limitations of a private member's bill. That said, it is a reality. This is going to cost \$2.3 billion, and there are no suggestions as to how this could be accomplished.

The other concern is that it's going to result in a patchwork because instead of having a plan ahead of time as to what those cycling networks will be, we are going to have ad hoc pieces of the highway where somebody can use their bicycle and then long stretches where they wouldn't. That is also problematic in the sense that it would be much better if you could have a comprehensive plan and build around that.

The bill is also slightly prescriptive. It suggests the shoulder should be one metre wide. Ministry guidelines actually suggest that it has to be wider than one metre, because the one metre would be substandard, but I'm sure that can be changed quite easily.

While paving shoulders as we go along is something that is difficult to support because of the issue around patchwork and the cost, I do support the idea, and I know the ministry also supports the idea, of amending the Highway Traffic Act so that cyclists can use existing shoulders. I think it does make sense, and it is something that this government is happy to work on with the MPP from Parry Sound–Muskoka, to look into and see if we can amend the Highway Traffic Act, although one must consider the safety issues around it.

Once again, I do want to say that we on this side are committed to the idea of promoting cycling. I do like the idea that the bill promotes, which is using the highway shoulder to allow bicyclists. I just want to say very quickly that the government—and I'm sure members on the opposite side are familiar with it—released its Ontario cycling strategy last summer, a 20-year vision that's looking at making sure that bicycling in Ontario is recognized as an economic, environmental, and health driver.

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So our commitment to the intent of this bill is solid. There are some problems, however, in the way it is structured.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to get up and support my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller, here today on his bill that he's raised in the House before.

I'd just like to comment on the past speaker, saying there's no plan, or it's going to cost \$2.3 billion right away. But if you read the bill, it actually says this will occur when the roads are resurfaced or restructured. There's going to be no extra work to be patchworked or such. It's up to each area of the MTO to figure out when they're going to be redoing certain highways and roadways and to include this in their work.

I know they're looking for reasons not to support the bill. They like the intent of many bills; however, the true colours show when it comes to voting time.

I don't know why you would not want to support this. As my member had mentioned earlier, look at the stakeholders supporting this bill. It's a vast cross-section of stakeholders: Ontario Medical Association, Ontario Road Builders' Association, Cycle Toronto, Ontario Safety League, Canadian Automobile Association, Share the Road Cycling Coalition and the Ontario Provincial Police. These stakeholders aren't just focused on one aspect in their daily jobs. They are, in fact, a broad mixture, together focusing on a great idea that can really benefit the people of Ontario.

I do want to say it is focused on public safety, which I think is great. It does improve the safety of those cyclists who, on occasion, will have to get off onto the shoulder when perhaps two trucks are coming this way—or the speed of certain vehicles coming by—and they do get that safety factor. I would like to point out that in my area, there have been quite a few car accidents and deaths as a result of people pulling off onto a gravel road, going at too high a speed where the car loses control, and they ricochet into the middle of the road or do a flip; whereas, if the shoulders are paved, it probably gives them a better fighting chance to actually make that swerve and avoid whatever the condition is that's causing them to go off the road. I do want to throw that aspect into this bill: the fact it's not only cyclists and pedestrians that are going to have safety with this bill, but also drivers will have that added protection of that shoulder being paved, giving them a little more control of their vehicle in the case of an accident or a possible accident.

The other point of the bill, which I find shocking, which I didn't really realize is, it's illegal to ride on the shoulder of highways as a cyclist. I can tell you right now, in my area of Ontario, there could be quite a few charges, because the last thing people want to be doing is being in the middle of the road when heavy traffic is going through, which makes them go onto the side of the road which has the gravel on it and makes it hard for them to steer and keep control of their bicycle or whatever instrument they are driving at the time.

I've got to say, this bill can be put into place with proper planning from the MTO. We have the confidence the MTO can do that when they're resurfacing roadways. Obviously, the government doesn't have faith in their own ministry because they're saying it would be patchwork. I think the MTO could actually take this bill and run with it and ensure the safety of the people across this province.

This is a good bill, Speaker, for a private member's bill. This is a bill that should go forward. It's going to be enhancing cycling throughout the province, which is something that we should be doing. It's making us healthier. Especially in the rural areas of this province, where it's a little tougher to get your bike out on the road—let's make a little safety for them and improve it not only for urban Ontario but for rural Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's not often that we New Democrats stand up and support Tory bills. But every

now and then, when they introduce bills, as has happened today with the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, we think it's a very sensible thing.

What the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London said is incredibly practical and makes a lot of common sense, as his former leader used to say. When you apply common sense to some bills, as you do on this one, you have to say, it makes sense.

So when I hear the opposition—and when the opposition speaks, by the way, they're usually given notes by the ministry—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The government, you mean.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: When the government members speak, they generally don't oppose a bill unless they've been given instructions. So when I hear the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville state her opposition to this bill, I'm a bit surprised and a bit shocked. I don't know how it is that she, and others who will speak after me who might speak in opposition, could do so with any sense of feeling intellectually comfortable because everything that this bill proposes is simple to understand, simple to do, and as they have indicated—both the mover and others who have spoken—this would happen only when they are repaved or resurfaced. There is no additional cost to the province, to us as taxpayers. It's a good thing, and we should be moving on this very quickly.

By the way, the minister has moved the project called #CycleON, as the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville said. This is a 20-year project, a vision that we think is, again, very reasonable. It's about designing healthy, active and prosperous communities; improving cycling infrastructure; making highways and streets safer—God bless; promoting cycling awareness and behaviour shifts; increasing cycling tourism opportunities—all this is good.

I say, why does it have to take 20 years when we can move on an initiative that's just been presented by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, and what appears to be a vision that could be done, in my view, in five years as opposed to 20. If Quebec can spend millions and millions of dollars on cycling infrastructure, why does it take us 20 years to do this? We spend \$1 billion to bus kids across the province, and we spend so little for safe and active routes to school where we can bring kids to the school by making sure they use their bicycles. Why do we spend so little?

And so, member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, your bill is sensible, practical—it makes sense. The government should be supporting you. We should be moving on it as opposed to having you reintroduce it again—assuming we're here for another year—and then having to deal with that. But you've got my support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I want to let the member from Trinity-Spadina know that I do feel intellectually comfortable going into this speech.

I'm pleased to speak here today about Bill 137, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway

Improvement Act—I would like to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing this forward and for the opportunity to speak to it. I'm an avid cyclist and I support the idea in principle, and I do have some concerns, and I feel intellectually comfortable with them.

Bill 137 would require construction of paved shoulders of prescribed portions of King's highways when there is significant undertaking to repave or resurface that portion. On this issue, I think we can all agree that the most important thing is cyclist safety, and the bill does something to address that. As a cyclist, though, I know that I will never ride on a road where cars are travelling 100 kilometres an hour; that's a personal decision I make. I think that the risk that's involved in doing that—shoulder or no paved shoulder—is one that people need to consider. I do know that many cyclists do ride on roads.

I think that when we go forward with this, it does require a strategy and some thought to think about the fact that we're putting more bikes on the road with more cars, so it requires some planning and some thought. I think it's important that we promote expanded cycling space and pave the shoulders and the roadway, but on the other hand, we have to examine the potential risks to cyclists and drivers as we encourage cyclists to use the roadways.

There's also an issue of cost. We all know that there's a fixed amount of money to spend on programs and as a result we must highlight what our priorities are, and get the right balance between competing goals. The estimated cost to construct proper cycling facilities, including pathway networks and paved shoulders, is about \$2.3 billion. As currently written, this bill does not address how we can fund this. That is why, while I support the principle of this bill, there are a number of issues that we need to address.

I would like to note, as other members have noted, that the government has introduced a cycling strategy—#CycleON: Ontario's Cycling Strategy—in August of this year. That cycling strategy, which you can find on the MTO website, outlines a 20-year vision for cycling in the province. As part of that strategy, the ministry formed a working group, which informs the government's plans going forward.

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Cycling in Ontario is recognized, respected and valued as a core mode of transportation that provides individuals and communities with health, economic, environmental, social and other benefits. Our government is committed to encouraging more people to use bicycles and other forms of active transportation and ensuring that the transportation network is safe and accessible for all road users.

While most cycling occurs in urban areas on municipal roads, the province continues to look at ways we can accommodate cycling with the provincial highway network while ensuring our roads remain among the safest in North America.

Our government supports amending the Highway Traffic Act to allow cycling on paved shoulders and is

currently looking at ways to do this. Monitoring plans for pilot projects, including the paved shoulders on Highway 6 south of Tobermory and on Manitoulin Island and other roadways, have been developed. Once multi-year data is collected, an evaluation will be done to investigate the impacts of the newly paved shoulders related to safety and cost-effectiveness.

I want to thank again the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for advancing this bill. I stand behind the principle of it. I will support the bill and also be intellectually comfortable. But I do believe there are a number of issues that require our serious consideration.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour to rise today and to stand in support of my colleague the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and his private member's bill, Bill 137, Paved Shoulder Construction and Bicycling Act.

Bill 137, as we've already heard, calls for a one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincial highways. This does not mean that right away the province would be forced to redo all of its designated highways. Paved shoulders will be added to provincial highways when they are being repaved or resurfaced and when, of course, it is feasible to do so.

Bill 137 would also amend the Highway Traffic Act, which currently states that it is illegal to ride on the shoulders of highways. This law is rarely enforced, and I can tell you that I have seen quite a few cyclists using the shoulder on highways in my riding of Chatham–Kent.

I might add, Speaker, that a few years ago my wife and her sister were cycling, and they were on a road where there wasn't that extra one metre. A vehicle approached them from behind. They noticed the vehicle, so they rode onto the shoulder. Unfortunately, it was a very soft shoulder. They lost control; they both fell off their bikes. My wife ended up with stitches. She's okay. But again, had that extra metre been there, I would guarantee you that she wouldn't have fallen and required stitches.

If this bill passes, it will allow cyclists to safely and legally ride on the shoulders of designated highways.

It has been estimated that 600,000 Ontarians cycle daily—perhaps a little bit less in the winter, but that is still a large number of cyclists.

As a matter of fact, Speaker, a few years ago it was pretty cold but the roads were bare, and on New Year's Eve, just for some excitement, my wife and I decided we were going to go do a 10K cycle through our neighbourhood. It was a lot of fun. I was glad to get home, though; it was a little chilly. But still, we got some great exercise.

Quite a few of these cyclists can be found in the riding of Chatham–Kent, whether they're cruising in downtown Chatham, enjoying the many riding trails our communities have to offer, or even making a stop at Rondeau Provincial Park. Cycling is enjoyed as both a mode of transportation and a recreational activity by many of my constituents.

Bicycle safety is an incredibly important matter in our communities. Unfortunately, we've had our share of

tragic accidents too. Last year, unfortunately, a migrant worker from Leamington—he was from Mexico—fell off his bike and was struck by a car and died.

About two years ago, a little young fellow, 14-year-old Jesse Nealey, was struck by a vehicle while riding his bicycle on Talbot Street in Blenheim. The following day, Jesse passed away as a result of injuries from that tragic accident. However, his mother, Annette, displaying incredible resilience and courage that makes me proud to represent Chatham–Kent–Essex, made it her mission to promote safety in her community. On the Saturday closest to Jesse's birthdate of October 21, a fundraising walk is held in Chatham–Kent to raise awareness of road-related safety and to honour the memory of a young man loved by his community. Speaker, by the way, over the past two years, the walk has raised more than \$10,000, and these proceeds make it possible for students to attend safety programs at the Chatham–Kent Children's Safety Village for free.

I've mentioned my wife's cycling. I do want to state that I also cycle with her a lot of times, and when the weather is good, we will in fact go anywhere from a 10- to 25-kilometre ride in the evening. That's usually the only time I have time to do that. We also have an annual pilgrimage. We go up to Grand Bend and, over two days, we'll cycle 80 kilometres or more. It's a great way to get good, healthy exercise as well as to see the countryside. It's really a lot of fun, and I would encourage people to do this more often.

I might add in closing that it's not a daily occurrence that we get to stand in this House and debate a bill that will save the lives of people, and that's exactly what the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka's Bill 137 will do. So let's make it safer for all Ontarians and let's pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for my voice. I'm just getting it back.

Listen, there are two things that I think we want to do in this House, and I think we all want to do them. Number 1 is to encourage people to cycle more. Why? Because it's healthier for them and it's healthier for the environment. And, number 2, it keeps them alive and safe and healthy while they cycle more. Those are the two aims.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has introduced this bill before. We've supported it before. We'll support it again. It's sad that it's taken two times. It's sad that the government isn't acting on this. I hear that they will. That's good, but, please, soon, not 20 years from now. You've heard my friend from Trinity–Spadina talk about the timeline. We need to save cyclists' lives now.

Again, I've heard the objections. I heard the member from Ottawa South talk about how, even if there were paved shoulders, he wouldn't cycle on the highway. Has he tried cycling in downtown Toronto? You want to talk about unsafe. I watch cyclists every day on Queen Street and King Street cycling. That brings me to another point about what else we should be doing. Many of you know

that it was myself who introduced the one-metre rule; that had incredible support. Eleanor McMahon, we love you—watching, I'm sure. The Share the Road Cycling Coalition gave both the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and myself awards for the two bills that we introduced. That bill has not been acted on either. Another bill that has not been acted on that has been talked about is, of course, MP Olivia Chow's bill about guards for trucks. That also would prevent deaths.

There are any number of concrete steps that actually don't need a lot of thought. The research has been done and the stakeholder groups have been consulted; they know. They're supportive. The research is there. The lives are being lost as we speak, or potentially. Let's do it now.

If there's one message that I'd like to get out, it's, let's pass it now. Let's do it now. I'm appealing to my friend over there as the Minister of Transportation. I know he has good intentions. I know he wants to move on this. Not in 20 years, please. Next week. We're not talking about a lot of money here, Mr. Speaker. I've heard about the financial objections, which is kind of wild coming from a party that spent \$1.1 billion to move some gas plants to save some seats. We won't go there. We'll be happy. It's almost Christmas. All I'm going to say is that what we're talking about here is moving forward into the future, not redoing every highway overnight. No, that's not what we're talking about. That's not what the member is talking about. He's talking about when work needs to be done on those highways, do it right the first time. You're going to hear more about that in trains later. But do it right the first time: a few pesos more to put the paved shoulder in so that cyclists' lives could be saved and people are encouraged to cycle more, the two aims we should all be on board with. That's why we're supporting it. That's why it's a good bill. Let's get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We talked a little bit about Cycle Ontario, and I appreciate that. This is very consistent with it. I want to thank my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his leadership. I also want to commend the members of the non-partisan, three-party cycling caucus. I think this has been a very important vehicle to advance that. You know my views on partisanship in this House.

#CycleON is an interesting document. We have had some hesitance on this bill, I'll be quite frank. It was less the content of the bill than the politics of this House sometimes.

1510

We believe that transportation, transit and mobility is a critical issue. To actually build out the full cycling system of shoulders and proper trails, we're looking at something significantly over \$2 billion to actually build the kind of system that people in other parts of North America have. There has been, quite frankly, a huge deficit. Fifty per cent of our trips in urban Toronto and urban Ottawa and Hamilton are less than five kilometres,

which means that for an active walker or a reasonably slow cyclist, that's reasonable.

Can you imagine? I've lost a lot of weight lately. People have said, "How did you do it?" Well, I've been on Burn Fat Not Fuel. I cycle or walk almost everywhere, I've given up my car, I'm saving \$11,000 a year and I've never been healthier. I think that was made by the member opposite. I didn't go on any radical—I'm doing something fairly simple and healthy. Can you imagine? I'm not at risk for a heart attack, the way I was before, and I'm not at risk for diabetes. There's no better prescription, no medication that's a substitute for active living, as you can tell by how much—I've lost about 45 pounds, so it's a lot of weight. It's a pretty sedentary lifestyle, and I'm going to cost all of my fellow Ontarians a lot of money if I don't take care of myself.

The other piece is that we talked about action. I like the fact that we're trying to do this as a non-partisan thing, and I think we take the spirit of the bill in there. I think there were some efforts on Bill 105, on the tax; there were some gestures of non-partisanship that I want to thank the opposition parties for. They didn't get into our notes as fast as we had hoped, maybe.

CycleON is an interesting process, because it actually includes members of other parties. Councillor Michael Layton is a member of that working group, and Councillor David Chernushenko, very active in the Green Party and a city councillor from Ottawa. We're trying to align the work we're doing as a government with the members from Kitchener–Waterloo and Parry Sound–Muskoka and my friend and parliamentary assistant Mike Colle from Eglinton–Lawrence.

We will have to be acting in concert as a government, we hope, with both opposition parties on the first-year action plan. As you know, the Cycle Ontario plan says that the government—and, I'll say, the Legislature collectively—has to introduce initiatives every year. Every year, we have to have a meeting with all the stakeholders who set the plan, to report back to them on how much success we had in our first-year implementation.

This is something I want to tell the member that he has advocated for, as have people like Eleanor McMahon, the Ontario Trucking Association, the CAO and the medical association. So I'm hoping that when these things come forward, they will be in the bill and the bill will enjoy speedy passage. That one-year action plan has to be done every year for 20 years until we get the whole thing built, and there has to be five. So I open that up, in a non-partisan way, to achieving that goal and that outcome.

I also want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park. I think the one-metre rule is something that's very pragmatic, and I have suggested this privately to the third party and to others. It works in Nova Scotia; I think it works in 17 states. We are open to that discussion, but to get something like that through and to deal with issues of dooring and other critical priorities that we've all identified in this House, I think we're going to need to collaborate. I want to make an open offer, on behalf of the government, to the New Democrats, because you

know some of the things we might have said in this House were not as charitable or as kind and as supportive as they might have been on that, and I apologize, because I think we share that.

People also say this is a very new government. Premier Wynne has—one of the reasons I'm the transportation minister is I know that for her, as a physically active woman who is a jogger, she knows, as a pedestrian, as someone who is not in the car a lot of the time, who is out running, how important pedestrian and cycling safety is.

I look forward to this. I think this is a spirit of co-operation. I thank the members opposite for their leadership on this. I think there's an opportunity to do a lot with this bill, and we'll support it and help bring it into law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's with great pleasure that I stand in support of my colleague's bill. Sometimes there are these bills that come around that don't happen by accident; they happen by design. We know that this one certainly came through a lot of thought, and I know that the member has been thinking and talking about this for some time.

I have a bit of a different angle on it, and some of it has been covered a little bit. Although the benefits this provides to cycling and for tourism and all these sorts of things are exemplary—I know that a lot of my friends actually cycle in and around the Barrie area; there's some great cycling around there, too. For those who don't know, you should try it out. A lot of the shoulders aren't paved, and it makes it very difficult. I've heard a lot of stories about people getting hurt because of that.

But I also happen to know two people, one of them in my family, who actually had some very bad accidents in cars because of shoulders that haven't been paved. One of them actually lost his life out in Saskatchewan, where my family is originally from. He had a terrible accident in the evening, hit a soft shoulder after a long time at work, after finishing a shift at work, and flipped the car over and lost his life. He was the father of two young kids. A paved shoulder would have prevented this from happening, presumably.

A friend of our family also lost their life—was changing a tire on the side of the road on a soft shoulder, and someone lost control of their car after the wheels went off the road and took them out, essentially. It was very, very tragic and something that that driver—I mean, someone's life was lost, but that driver is going to have to live with that for the rest of their life, too. And it's something that might have been preventable if this bill had been in place then.

Sometimes we talk about the cost of these things, and I know that that concern has been brought up and certainly is something we need to consider, especially with the economy in the condition it is. But you know what? We can't lose track of the investments that we make. Sometimes the government makes investments that don't

pay for themselves. I'm not going to get into them, but there are lots of them. The fact is, there are lots of investments we can make that not only will save lives but in the long run won't cost money; they will actually make us money. This is one of them. It has so many benefits and so little downside.

Every road, at some point or another, needs to be repaved, it needs to be resurfaced, or new roads being built all the time or new roads being paved for the first time get an opportunity to have a paved shoulder on them. So this isn't something that's considering paving all the shoulders of all these—many of them rural roads—all at once or doing it over a period of time. It's really something that's going to take quite a bit of time to get done.

I think it's an extremely reasonable piece of this bill to make sure that not only cyclists are safe but motorists of all sorts that use these roads get to travel safely. Probably most of our roads—I don't know the exact number, and if I had known I was going to refer to this, I would have done the research on it, but most of our roads in Ontario, kilometre-wise, are probably rural and would be affected by this bill.

Certainly I support it. I think that anything that saves lives and actually can make us money seems like something, to me, that we can't lose on. So it's my hope that this bill will get supported, that the government will support it and the NDP will also support it. I will support it wholeheartedly, and I'm really proud to be able to stand here today and speak in support of it myself.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up in this House today to speak in support of Bill 137. As has already been mentioned, I am a member of the all-party caucus, bike caucus. I serve with the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka and also with the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, and we have had conversations about how we can further the cycling agenda in the province of Ontario in a non-partisan way. This private member's bill is a vehicle to do that.

I wanted to talk about my first encounter with Eleanor McMahon. It was some six years ago at a women in politics conference, and she got up and told this incredibly personal and heartbreaking story of her husband, who was hit by a driver who actually had a suspended licence at the time. I just marvelled at her courage and her passion for change, because she has turned that grief into a very powerful advocacy momentum around creating safer cycling routes and creating an honest and transparent conversation about what's happening in the province of Ontario on cycling.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: She's a Windsor native.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And she's from Windsor. I have to get that in.

And this is also the power of a minority government. New Democrats have come to this place, and we have brought the priorities of people to this place—we are proud of that—and we have secured concessions in both

budgets that actually benefit the lives of the people that we serve. I was brought into the all-party cycling because my critic portfolio is economic development, and this is a missed opportunity in the province. We have seen other jurisdictions like Quebec really transform the cycling conversation into a benefit for everyone, around tourism.

Also, on Active and Safe Routes to School, the transportation budgets in our school system are not sustainable. We are busing children who need to be walking, who need to be cycling. This is a huge cost to the province, not just in funding but in the health of our children. There needs to be an education platform that includes Active and Safe Routes to School, which includes walking and which includes cycling.

1520

Congratulations, actually, to the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka. He is passionate about this change. We are proud to stand in this House and support it and to join with the PC caucus. I hope that the Minister of Transportation takes this to heart.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to all the members who spoke today. There are 4.5 million Ontarians who cycle at least once a month, and the interesting stat is that the biggest-growing population of cyclists are actually older Ontarians. In fact, my mother, who is 84, until fairly recently was a fairly keen cyclist just around the town of Gravenhurst. It's that older segment that is growing the most.

I guess, first of all, there were some concerns raised—I would say all legitimate concerns. The member from Mississauga East—Cooksville raised the question of cost. That's why this bill is meant to be—I think it even says “where practicable” to be doing repaving, and that's meant to consider costs. Also, it's meant to be done when a road is being repaved, with costs in mind, so it could be over 18 years, if that's the length of a lifetime of a road.

The member for Ottawa South raised a question of 100-kilometre highways. It's designated provincial highways. Secondary highways are the intention for most of them, and the great majority are 80 kilometres an hour. I won't say they all are, but the great majority are. But it is in the power of the Minister of Transportation to designate which highways make sense. We have seen progress for Highway 6, as was mentioned, on Manitoulin Island. I think it was really the first official highway to have its shoulder paved. I certainly am seeing in my riding highways like 124 between Parry Sound and Sundridge being paved.

But I want to thank the members for their support. The member from Kitchener—Waterloo brought up the all-party cycling caucus and safe and active routes to school. I think that's an important idea that needs further work, and I'm sure we'll be talking about it. It has certainly been raised in my issue, where Almaguin high school was built between two towns, between South River and Sundridge. The mayor of Sundridge—that was the issue

he wanted to bring up, that he wanted to make sure that kids could cycle to the school instead of just having to ride the bus. So thank you to the members for their comments and support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on that at the end of private members' business.

FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
AMENDMENT ACT
(SPRING BEAR HUNT), 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
DU POISSON ET DE LA FAUNE
(CHASSE À L'OURS PRINTANIÈRE)

Mr. Mauro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 to provide for a spring bear hunt / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune afin de prévoir une chasse à l'ours printanière.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to rise and have 12 minutes this afternoon on Bill 114, my private member's bill.

I want to say, Speaker, that the purpose of this bill, first and foremost, is simply to reintroduce a spring bear hunt, and, in my mind, this is first, foremost and finally a very significant public safety issue—no more than that, from my perspective. That is the primary focus of the legislation. I believe it's necessary, and I've believed that for a very long time.

I will say, as well, that I believe that this is very much an issue that, unfortunately, expresses the north-south divide in the province of Ontario. I've been here 10, going on 11, years now, and I've tried very hard over the period of time to not get drawn into that narrative, but I think, on this issue, it is basically impossible not to see the clear distinction in terms of attitudes on this particular issue. It's unfortunate because this is a very legitimate issue.

Speaker, I want to also make very clear, as I move forward, that this is not about establishing a bear hunt in Ontario. We currently hunt bears in Ontario, and we've been hunting bears in Ontario for a very long time. My bill today is not trying to establish a bear hunt. What I'm trying to establish is a spring bear hunt, to change a component of when the bears are hunted back to the spring, where it was historically for a very long time in the province of Ontario.

There are some people, not many, who have opposed this, and I respect their position: in northern Ontario, I'm talking about—not a lot of them, but some. They didn't even know we were hunting bears. They thought there

was no bear hunt at all. And so to them I say that this is not establishing a bear hunt—we do that. This is moving some of it forward to the spring.

I also say that when the Conservatives cancelled this in 1999, the justification for the bill was that there were going to be orphaned cubs created, or they were being created, as a result of people hunting bears in the spring. I can tell you that the desired effect, if that in fact was the goal—and that certainly was the expressed goal—is not being met. If people don't think that bears are being shot in northern Ontario in the springtime, they are sadly mistaken. I can tell you that if you lived in northern Ontario, if your property or your pets or your family were being threatened by a bear, you would do what a lot of people in northern Ontario are doing and have been doing since the hunt was cancelled in 1999, and that is shooting those bears. I tell you that if the people that are opposed to this lived in those jurisdictions and they had the capacity to shoot a bear under those circumstances, they would do the same thing.

I would say that you might even have created a situation where you are orphaning more cubs under this circumstance than was the case when the spring hunt was allowed to exist. It's somewhat—you could even make the argument of the rule of unintended consequences. I can't say that for certain. I don't pretend to have data or numbers on that, but what I can say to you for certain is that a lot of people are shooting a lot of bears in northern Ontario in the spring, and they've been doing that since the hunt was cancelled in 1999. They are doing that because they are afraid for their own safety, their children's, their pets' and their property's.

There is a tremendous amount of support for the bill in northern Ontario, as you can imagine. Every municipality in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan has passed a resolution supporting my bill. The city of Thunder Bay—I want to thank them for it, the townships of O'Connor, Gillies, Conmee, Atikokan, Oliver Paipoonge, and Neebing, as well as, I would say, hundreds of people that have affixed their signatures to petitions supporting Bill 114 that would bring about the return of the spring bear hunt.

As well, beyond the municipalities, of course, there are a number of other organizations that have come out in a very big way in support of Bill 114. NOSA, of course, the Northern Ontario Sportsmen's Alliance, the regional hunting and fishing organization in the Thunder Bay region: I want to thank their executive director, John Kaplanis, their VP Bert Johnson, Jack Mack, and others for all of their help in garnering the signatures on the petitions that I have presented to the Legislature over the last number of weeks, and I want to thank them for their support.

One of the things that I've been asked about since I introduced Bill 114, and I feel the need to speak to this, was the approach that was taken by the NDP three or four weeks after I introduced my bill. They have asked me what it was that they were proposing. I have told them quite frankly—I see the member from Timiskaming—

Cochrane is here today, and I look forward to his remarks. I told them that what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane brought forward was a motion that would establish a committee. I've also told them quite frankly, and I say it to the member, who is in the Legislature today, that it's my belief—and he can tell me if I'm wrong and he probably will—that he didn't want to do that. I don't think he wanted to bring forward a motion that spoke to forming a committee. He is a northerner. I think he gets it and I think he knows that a spring bear hunt is what we've all wanted. He didn't do it. Maybe he will have a chance to tell us why he didn't do it. But I can tell you this: that nobody in northern Ontario, certainly in Thunder Bay, the people that I've talked to, has been at all fooled by the approach that has come forward. They know that for 14 years there was no movement on this from the third party. They know that in the elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011, there was nothing in the election platform from the party speaking to it. But coincidentally, three or four weeks after I tabled a private member's bill on this, the NDP found religion and introduced a motion that would establish a committee. Nobody is being fooled by this—nobody.

What's also interesting about this is—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Premier is not going to be happy with you about that.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm trying to be gracious here, my friend. I'm trying to be gracious to you.

What's interesting about this is that we've received criticism in this Legislature for quite some time as being the party that likes to consult and likes to talk. We're told, "Enough of that. No more committees. Let's have some action." Well, in fact, that's what is being offered by the third party. They are saying, "Let's form a committee and let's go talk about this," 14 years later. No criticism to the member; I'm just telling you what I'm hearing in the riding. That's exactly what people think.

1530

As I said, there were other unintended consequences from when the spring hunt was cancelled in 1999. Other organizations that perhaps at the time were not contemplated as having a significant position on the cancellation of the spring hunt have come forward and expressed their support as well. The member opposite would probably be aware that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, before my bill was reintroduced—and 2012, I think, was the last time—very publicly expressed their interest in seeing the reintroduction of the spring bear hunt. That wasn't in reaction to my private member's bill; the Ontario Federation of Agriculture did that on their own. I didn't ask them to do it. There was no legislation tabled at the time. I don't know if there were any other groups that were asking them to do that. The OFA did that on their own.

NOSA in northwestern Ontario has been advocating for this for a very long time. Beekeepers all across Ontario—and that is a group in my riding that has endorsed this bill as well. We've heard from the Minister of Transportation quite a bit. I had a private member's

bill tabled—I didn't bring it forward, but I had it prepared quite a while ago—regarding what's happening to the bee population worldwide and in Ontario. The Thunder Bay Beekeepers' Association very strongly support this, as I think you would likely see support for this across Ontario.

On the numbers—I want to say I don't want this to get bogged down in numbers. One number that we know with certainty is that since the hunt was cancelled in 1999, 1,400 fewer bears per year were being harvested in the province of Ontario. There was mandatory reporting on bear hunting, so there was a number that we could speak to without equivocation: We knew there were 1,400 fewer bears being harvested in Ontario from 1999 until 2007.

For some reason, I can't get the number beyond 2007, but if you want to take those eight years times 1,400, I think we can extrapolate out that there are more bears in the bush. There are more bears out there, and they are causing a problem. There is no doubt about it.

In Canada, this is not something that we should be viewing as a radical approach to wildlife management. The province of British Columbia has a spring hunt as a wildlife management tool, and the province of Alberta, the province of Saskatchewan, the province of Manitoba, the province of Quebec, the provinces of New Brunswick and Newfoundland—seven other provinces. The Northwest Territories does it. Nunavut does it. The Yukon does it. Seven provinces, three territories—Ontario would be the eighth.

Prince Edward Island doesn't do it; I'm not sure why. I don't know if they have bears in PEI. The other one would be Nova Scotia, and I'm not sure about the situation in Nova Scotia.

This is going on in almost the rest of the country. Everybody else is doing this. Why was it cancelled in Ontario in 1999? I'll look forward to hearing from some of the members of the official opposition.

There is an opportunity for us to do this now. I've been asked, "Well, Billy, why are you doing this now? Why didn't you do it before?" The truth of it is, as a northern Liberal caucus, we did try to do this before. I've said this publicly to the media in Thunder Bay: We couldn't advance it. We tried in the past and we couldn't advance it. There's a different dynamic existing in this Legislature today. We've got a minority Legislature, which the opposition parties like to remind us about from time to time, as is their right. With their support—both parties—we could get this legislation passed today. That's why I'm doing it now. I didn't do it in my platform in 2003, 2007 or 2011 because I was quite certain it couldn't be advanced. Now, we have a minority—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You had a majority government.

Mr. Bill Mauro: And I'm telling you, we couldn't advance it. I say that unequivocally. We tried and we didn't get it done. Now, with your help, the member from Trinity-Spadina, we can get it done. You're all going to stand. Where are your members? Show up and support

my bill and we'll get it passed. It's a minority Legislature. You and me: We'll do it together. We'll get it passed. We're looking forward to your support.

Here we are. It's 2013. The hunt has been cancelled for 14 years—the spring hunt, not the bear hunt; simply the spring hunt has been cancelled. We know under that capacity, since it was cancelled, 1,400 fewer bears per year were being harvested in Ontario. There are people who work within the ministry, I will tell you, who have come up to me and said, “Thank you for doing this,” because when they go out in the bush now with their kids and go camping, they take rifles with them, and they did not used to do that. This is a real issue. It is a real issue. Things have changed. People's lives and their property and their children and their pets are at risk. And this bill, I believe, is a way that we have an opportunity to affect that situation that was created back in 1999.

Speaker, I thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 114, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 to provide for a spring bear hunt.

I do believe that hunting is a useful management tool for maintaining the ideal number of the population of bears or other animals. I note that in our recent white paper, which is called *Paths to Prosperity: A Champion for Northern Jobs and Resources*, our solution is that northern communities should be given more control over their land and wildlife and be able to decide where they might like to do something like a spring bear hunt. I note that the government kind of copied that a little bit with their recent announcement of a pilot project, but they missed out on including Parry Sound–Muskoka. I'd just like to remind the government that there are actually bears in Parry Sound–Muskoka. In fact, I think we probably have as many as anywhere in northern Ontario. I had one municipality last year that wanted to pass—I would think it's within municipal rules, but they actually wanted to put a bounty on bears. That was the township of Archipelago. “Archipelago”—I'm reading from *CottageCountryNow*—“Searches for Solution to Its Nuisance Bear Problem

“Council has asked staff to prepare a bylaw that will look at implementing a bounty for going after the nuisance bears since the (Ministry of Natural Resources) isn't doing anything about the issue.”

That didn't go anywhere, but certainly the approach that we have right now, where we do have bears that are essentially being wasted—the MNR is not doing anything about them now. They used to have a program. They're not doing anything about them. So now the OPP is called in when someone has a bear trying to break into their home, and essentially police aren't equipped or trained to deal with something like bears—they're brought out to kill the bear and it's wasted. This is not the way it should be. It's not a good solution for anything.

In Archipelago's case, they've now noted that the pilot project that the government has announced doesn't

include Parry Sound–Muskoka. They would like to see—in fact, just recently in a newspaper article it says, “Archipelago Wants Spring Bear Hunt Here.” Just quoting one line in this article: “But the Parry Sound area, said Archipelago Reeve Peter Ketchum, nears the top of the list as well. He gave the example of an 80-cottage island near Parry Sound that had 50 reports of nuisance bears last summer.”

They went on to pass a resolution, and it reads:

“Ministry of Natural Resources proposed black bear management pilot in north

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is proposing a two-year bear management pilot program; and

“Whereas the wildlife management units where the proposed pilot program are to occur exclude units 46 and 49, which consist primarily of Parry Sound district; and

“Whereas the Parry Sound district is consistently in the top three, and more than once has been the top number one bear-human occurrence district in the province, according to the ministry's data;

“Now therefore be it resolved they request that the township of Archipelago requests the Ministry of Natural Resources to include areas 46 and 49 in the proposed pilot program;

“And further be it resolved that this resolution be circulated to Parry Sound area municipalities, AMO, FONOM, Premier Kathleen Wynne and David Orazietti, Minister of Natural Resources.”

For all the members out there, Parry Sound does have situations certainly with nuisance bears, and no matter whether it's a spring bear hunt or a pilot project, it needs to be included in whatever this Legislature decides or the government decides it would like to do with the issue of bears.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand here and debate the pros and cons of the spring bear hunt in this Legislature. I've been talking about the pros and cons of the spring bear hunt for years because I was the president of the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture and I'm one of the people to push the OFA.

I'd like to back up a little bit. Some of the things that the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan spoke of, I don't disagree—about the number of bears, the increase in the number of bears. I agree with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

1540

But a couple of our biggest problems—and why we introduced the all-party committee; and why it passed in the Legislature—the person we can't get to agree is the Minister of Natural Resources, in your government. I'd like to quote him. On August 21 on CBC, regarding bears—according to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the numbers are going up, and I agree with him. But according to the Minister of Natural Resources, “The numbers are relatively stable. Every year we have a different level of food sources and varying weather

conditions affect and do affect the number of nuisance bears we have in various communities.”

He also said in that interview that the government was not going to bring back the spring bear hunt. That’s the political issue we’re fighting here. Yes, the Conservatives did cancel the spring bear hunt. But for 10 years, the Liberals have done—say it with me—nothing. Nothing.

In response, we decided we’d put forward a committee—and not some blue-ribbon panel that is going to talk out somewhere and make reports—a structure of four MPPs, one from each party plus a government Chair, to actually talk to the people who deal with bears and to come back with a recommendation—and not create new science; look at the science that’s there, come back with a recommendation and come up with a policy. That’s what we said, and it passed in this House.

Instead of doing that, what the minister and the member’s government decided to do is come up with a pilot program “spring bear hunt.” The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan said—and I agree that this issue over the years has split the north from the south, and northerners feel alienated. Even people who never had anything to do with the spring bear hunt felt alienated. But what this government has now done is split northerners and said, “Well, in this area, a bear is more dangerous in Timmins than in New Liskeard.” That is beyond the pale. That is not the third party that did that; that is not the opposition party that did that. That, my friend, is the governing party that did that.

So we are still at the point where there isn’t really a spring bear hunt. And with the pilot project, they’re going to do a bit of work to see if it’s actually going to alleviate the problem, although there’s no guarantee that the nuisance bear problem—it comes in different areas. Our worst year was 2007. Yes, I’ve probably shot more bears than anybody else in this Legislature. Do you know what? I didn’t report them, because we had no faith in the MNR. This one was in Cochrane, but that’s not saying that the next one’s going to be in Timmins or Sudbury or North Bay. So how are you going to know if this pilot project works when you don’t know where the bear problems are? They’ve stripped the MNR so badly, they don’t even know how many bears there are.

You know, it’s time to take this issue and talk about the real issue, about how much money we actually put into wildlife, which you have stripped—this government has stripped—more and more because of the transformation. It’s centralization. So you’re taking people out of the field, out of the forest, you’re putting them in offices and you’re coming up with more and more rules, but actually you don’t know what’s going on. I wish I had an hour instead of six minutes. That’s what’s happening here.

Again, this motion is by a government member who can’t even convince his own government party to do something, and he’s complaining that we can’t. Like, what is going on?

Now we’ve got a pilot project. So in some places, you can have a spring bear hunt, but the municipalities have

to agree. I don’t understand that. Even the people who work in the MNR don’t understand that. And at the end of the day, when you have a nuisance bear problem, and when my mom gets a bear on her deck, she still has to call the OPP, and the OPP—even the minister will admit—are not trained to handle this situation. So, actually, nothing has changed.

I’d like to say right now that I’m going to vote in favour of this motion, because what still has to happen is this government or the next one has to strike that all-party committee, and we have to look at this issue. That’s why we’re voting for it, so that this issue isn’t taken off the table, because the government has proven by what they’ve done with this pilot project that they don’t have the right ideas. So strike this committee, and let’s talk about this sanely and sensibly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I’d like to take advantage of this time just to mention briefly, from my wife, my family, all of our families and all the Dickson families, to wish everyone a very holy and merry Christmas.

It’s a pleasure to talk to Bill 114 today. I’ve listened to the debate so far, and it’s bringing out very, very good points. I really like what I’m hearing, and I thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for bringing this back again.

I have to tell you that when it comes to the spring bear managed hunt—that’s what I call it—I’m quite proud, because I’ve done a lot of travelling in the north. I know, as the chair of Stationers Marketing of Canada, there’s probably not a northern town of more than 10,000 people that I haven’t met with various people there.

My family are snowmobilers. They’re children, but they’re not children—they’ve hit the age of 40. So when we go snowmobiling, I go out for a few days at a time, but they’ll do the tour of Algonquin park for four or five days, and they trailer up north and they love it. They really love it.

I have to just make some comments on bears. Bears are what I call omnivores. They eat both meat and vegetables. The bears come out in the spring, as we all know, because we’re talking about the spring hunt, and I tell you, they come out dangerous and hungry. Trust me, because I’ve seen them.

The bears at the dump—and I give credit to the province of Ontario and to the various ministries, because they’ve done a good job in that they’ve closed, particularly in my area, three of four dumps, and that’s working with more recycling, more conservation. It actually happens two miles north of Ajax, in the Apsley-Bancroft area. It’s a great area.

The spring bear managed hunt is really about a multitude of things. It’s about tourism in northern Ontario, which creates seasonal jobs, and tourism leads to a better life of northern Ontarians. This is about the safety of human beings, not being mauled or killed by a bear. This would correct the problem, not just the ministry’s two-year test in four land areas in the north,

which my colleague across the way was referencing as “designed by bureaucrats.” I don’t think they get it.

There are provinces that now have a spring hunt, all of seven provinces plus the three territories—Ontario could be the eighth in that. I think, as our member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan said, it only left PEI and Nova Scotia. Well, I don’t think there’s enough room in PEI to get a bear on there anymore, but they’ve always been very gentle in the Cape Breton area. So that just really leaves us, and we need to do something about it, because it’s a real problem in northern Ontario.

A sitting member had told me a story recently of an encounter with his grandmother in northern Ontario—his grandmother was 91 years of age, by the way. She came close to death in her own backyard in northern Ontario when a bear came at her.

1550

We should also reference that the legislation requires the approval of the municipality. I think that’s a major point because at the municipal level, where many of us have sat for a number of years, is where those elected people are closest to the public. They have their feet on the ground, and they hear what the residents say.

I’m going to just reference one other. In my area, which is halfway between Apsley and Bancroft, on Chandos, I have an 83- or 84-year-old lady—I’ll just call her Alfreda, a real sweetheart. We do whatever we can to help her. I know on the weekends I go get her the newspaper in town, and so on and so forth. But two years ago, just when she went out on the road, after she had come back from Florida—a very early part of the year, not as far as the summer—a bear with a cub had come out. She just screamed. She didn’t know what to do. She ran for her car. Eventually, the bear—but if she had been that much closer, she felt that the bear would have killed her.

I’ve also spoken to trappers. In my area, there are a number of trappers. One of them is full-time, and when he’s not trapping, he’s working on boat and marine work. They tell me that there is a serious problem with the way the ministry has been doing things, and I’ve been listening to him tell me this for 20 years. He knows his business, and I’m not going to challenge him, quite honestly.

There’s a number of other things. I guess I’m sharing my time with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, so I’ve got another minute or so? Thank you.

What happens is, we will reduce a number of things. We’ll reduce bears’ impact on bees. Between the years 2000 and 2008, we know that black bears have destroyed over 4,000 beehives and colonies. We will help boost the northern Ontario moose population by reducing the number of moose calves that are killed by bears. Our MPP who brought this bill forward wants to see an introduction of measures that would reduce the likelihood of female bears being killed in the spring bear hunt.

Since the end of the spring bear hunt, there have been approximately 1,400 fewer bears harvested each year; that’s since 1999. That amounts to roughly 20,000 more bears out there, depending on whose count you go by.

The ministry will go from 85,000 to 100,000 in northern Ontario. There is an educator in Alberta who has done a study and says there are about 110,000 there. So it goes on and on and on.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: That’s a big number.

Mr. Joe Dickson: That is a big number, and it’s a big concern. The whole scenario is a concern and, as the colleague across the way has indicated, it hasn’t been done right, and it has to be done right. This has to stay on the format in this Legislature.

So I’ll sit down, Mr. Speaker, and leave my time for the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I too am pleased to rise to speak to this bill. The black bear population in Ontario is healthy and increasing. There have been increased reports of black bears acting aggressively towards humans, and some recent high-profile attacks have been reported.

Speaker, recently, at our PC policy convention, a motion came forward from our northern colleagues which would offer northern municipalities the option of implementing a spring bear hunt managed through the MNR, similar to the successful Sunday gun hunting initiative granted to the municipalities through the MNR. In our northern white paper released last month, we directly addressed the issue of wildlife management in the north. We state, “Give northerners more control over the use and management of their land and wildlife. Northern decisions that primarily affect the north are most appropriately made” by northerners “in the north.”

Now, Speaker, and to the member across the floor, I am going to support this bill. The truth of the matter is that even if the House adopts this private member’s bill, I don’t believe anything will happen. This government has neglected the north for the past decade, ignored its voice and would never do anything substantive to deal with the issue.

I’m going to give you proof of that. In 2005, my predecessor, a government member who went on to become a Liberal cabinet minister, brought a motion before this House on the problem of nuisance bears. It stated, “That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should do whatever is necessary to protect the citizens of Ontario from nuisance bears.” That’s part of this bill that was brought forward.

It was overwhelmingly approved in this Legislature. It was a unanimous vote in favour; it was unanimous. But nothing happened. That was eight years ago. What did the Liberal government do with it? Absolutely nothing; nothing has been done, very sadly. In fact, we’ve taken a step back. The MNR last year cancelled its relocation program and no longer sets out traps for problem bears. It’s representative of the Liberals’ treatment of the north, Speaker. They’ve given up and left northerners to fend for themselves.

I know that the member is bringing this private member’s bill forward and I know that he has said in the past he couldn’t advance it. I’m going to support this bill,

but I don't know that it's ever going to see the light of day, much like all the bills that support the north don't ever come back for final reading; hopefully, it will go to committee and get debated ad nauseam. Then it will sit in a file somewhere, never to be seen again.

I thank you for the time to stand and continue to fight for northern Ontarians again.

Seeing as I have a couple of seconds, I too want to add my message to the citizens of the city of North Bay, to all of Corbeil, Callander, Chisholm, Bonfield, Rutherglen, Trout Creek, Powassan, Mattawa and everywhere in between—Astoria and all the great communities that we get a chance to visit—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, perhaps you can do that in your time. I just want to wish them all a very merry Christmas and wonderfully happy New Year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wanted to wish everybody a merry Christmas before I start, and I want to thank Todd Lane, my legislative assistant, who helped me with some of my notes. I usually don't get to say thank you to him publicly, but he makes my life easier.

Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan's bill to reintroduce the spring bear hunt. As a former Minister of Natural Resources, the issue regarding northerners and their relationship with all wildlife has been made closer to my heart over the years. I'm really proud of our record on bear management, and I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for his continued advocacy on this important issue.

I appreciate the irony of a southerner from a relatively urban riding like mine who would continually stand to speak on this important issue. But during my time at MNR, I worked closely with individuals and mayors in northern communities, and I got to learn about the black bear issue and how important it is. I know that the Ministry of Natural Resources worked really hard with community leaders to establish local prevention programs. I know it's something they've been working on for many, many years. At the end of the day, dealing with bears and their interaction with humans is a responsibility we share between local municipalities, the government, the province and all individuals. We all need to take a role in this.

There have been lots of changes in northern Ontario. We've had the change in the weather. The warming of the environment has certainly made it easier for bears to encroach on villages and towns. We've heard these concerns—certainly, we heard a little bit about it on our visit last week to the northern summit, when we went to Timmins. The Premier, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Minister of Natural Resources, myself and five other ministers met with mayors and municipal officials from around the region, and this is one of the issues they talked about.

That's why I'm proud of our member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan and our entire government: We listen to

northerners' concerns, and we work with all those individuals to come up with recommendations on how our government can best help northern communities manage their interactions with bears, because at the end of the day, ensuring that Ontarians are safe when they encounter bears is our government's top priority. That is why all of us in the House need to ensure that people in the north, whether they be residents or tourists, are protected from dangerous nuisance bears.

1600

I'm proud of what we're doing. I guess one of the things that is the hardest part of being a Minister of Natural Resources—and really when I became Minister of Labour at the same time—is when your BlackBerry buzzes and something bad has happened somewhere in the scope of your ministry. I remember, in October 2011, when I received the information that a member of my staff at the Ministry of Natural Resources, a female staffer, was attacked by a bear north of Thunder Bay. Her life was saved by a colleague, but obviously she was badly injured trying to fight off this bear. And that moment, that very moment when I received that information, changed my perception about this issue. It changed the life of my staffer, and certainly it's something that consumes many people in the north. They must be careful about where they go and what they do.

As a minister and as a human being, your heart breaks when something like that happens, when it's somebody who works for you, let alone somebody you love. I know that the Minister of Education has said they've had to shut down schoolyards for safety reasons on a couple of occasions because there was a bear where the children were likely to play. So, as far as I'm concerned, this is a safety issue. This is about public safety, and I'm interested in making sure that all Ontarians, whether they live in the north or in southern Ontario, are safe. I believe that whether you're from my riding of Brampton—Springdale, a very urban riding, or from the riding of Timmins—James Bay or Thunder Bay—Atikokan, you should never have fear of your life being lost by being attacked by a bear. I'm happy to support this legislation, and I look forward to further debate on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to stand up and speak on Bill 114, and I very much hope the member from Trinity—Spadina shows up and gives us an appropriate perspective on his opinion of what may or may not transpire with this bill. I can tell you some of the things the member who brought the bill forward mentioned, hearing about some of the things that happened. I can, quite frankly, say, and will say it again, that reading Hansard from June 15, 1998, the member from Beaches—Woodbine, Ms. Frances Lankin, stood up and said, "Today is June 15, and that marks the end of the spring bear hunt for this year. We hope we will be able to say that it marks the end of the spring bear hunt forever." And it goes on.

The member asked about some of the details of how it happened.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How did it happen?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I can tell you quite frankly that all the organizations knew about it, because I phoned them. If you read the editorial from Ontario Out of Doors, it specifically said they couldn't believe it happened, "not that we weren't warned," Conservative MPP Jerry Ouellette from Oshawa phoned just about everybody "who would listen," and nobody listened. Nobody paid attention.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Nobody paid attention, nobody listened and they were totally shocked, and then they went on to say that.

I will admit that the one organization I did not phone was the OFA. I did not call the OFA on that particular one, but I spoke to the other individuals who are now talking about what's happening and what needs to come up.

I'll be endorsing this as well and, quite frankly, anybody who thinks that a spring bear hunt in Oshawa is going to be a big vote-getter—it's not going to assist me in any fashion at all. The member mentioned the politics of introducing bills, and we all have to look at those things and the total politics that take place with these issues.

Some of it is the difficulty that people don't understand about bears. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane specifically talked about bear counts. Bear counts aren't done in the way most people understand in the province of Ontario or around the world. There are no helicopter surveys, because bears aren't out at that time, and you can't. Believe it or not, it's a sardine can line that works in order to count bears. It's the way they do it. They get bears used to coming out, and then in one time frame they bring out a whole bunch of sardine cans in a five-mile stretch and they tell within three hours how many bears are at that one and they can kind of predict in that area. So it's not a great science that happens out there, but it's the best way it can happen.

But a lot of things have changed and transpired. Quite frankly, I spoke to individuals in Foleyet who were telling me that some of the difficulty is that the bears are now out until the end of November, where once upon a time the season—quite frankly, they were all in hibernation by the end of October because there was snow at that time. Some of the things the ministry can do is extend that season for parts of northern Ontario in the fall, where individuals are out moose hunting or deer hunting at that time throughout the entire province. If they allowed the bear hunt to go to the same time and close on the unified part of the entire province on November 15, it would assist in a long way to reduce or to give people the opportunity to participate in that.

There are a number of other aspects. One of the other things I need to mention, as well—it says right here, from Timmins Today, "Premier Kathleen Wynne has repeatedly stated that the Liberal Party does not support a spring bear hunt, and Timmins–James Bay NDP representative

Gilles Bisson stated at last week's North Eastern Ontario Municipal Association meeting that the NDP would not support the spring bear hunt either. So far only the Ontario PC Party has remained open to the concept and is working on a more progressive and practical outcome than what exists today."

I think what needs to happen is, again, an understanding. The more that individuals in this Legislature understand what happens in each and every one of our ridings, the more we'll understand the impact and how we can all come together on making decisions that will benefit the entire province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just a couple of things; I've only got five minutes, so I'll try to do that in the little five minutes I have.

First of all, where did this come from? It was the Conservatives. It was Mr. Mike Harris, then Premier of Ontario, who decided he was going to cancel the spring bear hunt. He did that how? It wasn't legislation. It was by essentially having the minister say, through the powers of the minister, "Stop doing this."

Who was one of the ministers during the time of the Harris government who could have reinstated the black bear hunt if he felt so passionately? It was the member who just spoke. He was the Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Ouellette, in the Harris government. He could have reinstated the black bear hunt.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I tried.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He says he tried, but he had no power within that cabinet or in that caucus to undo it.

So we know where the Tories are at. When the Tories were in power, they were opposed to the black bear hunt, and they cancelled it. Now, here we are. We've got Mr. Mauro—I'm sorry; I don't know the riding—up in Thunder Bay—

Interjection: Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Never mind. Up in Thunder Bay—

Interjection: Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —up in Thunder Bay somewhere, who is now saying, "Oh my God, look at the polls. Oh Lord almighty, I'm in another race." Mr. Landslide Bill is saying, "I've got to do something to keep them pesky New Democrats off my heels, so I've got to do something." So he sits down with his folks and he says, "What can I do to try to pull this off and have a seat-saver program?"

The Liberals are really good at seat-saver programs, so he says, "I know; I'll bring back the spring bear hunt," and he brings this bill before the House today. Well, I'll vote for it. I have no problem voting for the spring bear hunt, because, as Mr. Vanthof correctly points out, what we need to have is a bear management policy.

To do that, we have put in place, by way of a motion from Mr. Vanthof, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, a special committee, one member from each party, to look at what the problem with nuisance bears is. We know what it is; it's a big problem. How do we deal

with that? Do we deal with it through a hunt? As well, what do we do with nuisance bears?

Here's a secret: Even if we reinstate the spring bear hunt next year, we're still going to have nuisance bears. Do you think we never had nuisance bears in northern Ontario prior to the cancellation of the spring bear hunt?

The other problem that we have to look at and that we need to take seriously: The Ministry of Natural Resources, under this government, has gutted the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources to be able to respond to phone calls and complaints when the black bears start coming into people's yards and onto their property. Because there's no capacity to do so, people are being put at risk as far as injury, and even possibly death; we have had some people killed as a result of black bear attacks.

There's a serious issue here, and the issue is that we need to make sure that public safety is maintained. We need to make sure that we do this in a way that makes sense ecologically when it comes to managing the black bear hunt. If that means changing the hunt in order to create a spring bear hunt of some type, in order to assist that, let's do that, but let's do that based on a little bit of work that the committee needs to do. We don't need to do a whole bunch; that could be pretty well done this winter if the government would have agreed to create that committee. Maybe they will decide to do it later.

But here's my guess: This bill will pass this afternoon. I think there will probably be a divided vote, because that's the little game that will be played here. All of the parties are going to vote in favour and we're still going to be where we were yesterday, because the government has already decided, by way of the Ministry of Natural Resources, to put in place a pilot program on the spring bear hunt that says that the bears in Timmins, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie are bears that are different than everywhere else in Ontario, and the dumps there are somehow different—I shouldn't say the dumps; the blueberries taste better there—we need to have a spring black bear hunt in those communities, but you don't need it in Hearst, you don't need it in Cochrane, you don't need it in Kirkland Lake, New Liskeard, Schreiber or any other community out there in northern Ontario.

That makes little sense, and there's not an outfitter in the world who's going to invest the kind of money they'd have to to get rigged up again to attract a black bear spring bear hunt, when they're not even allowed, under this pilot project, to go to their traditional base, which are their American hunters, who normally came in and did this kind of thing.

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So I'll vote in favour of this motion, because I think we need to be honest with ourselves. If, on the one hand, we have this motion from Mr. Vanthof that says, "Let's look at the hunt as one of the ways of being able to deal with this, but let's also look at the issue of how we manage the nuisance bears," I think it's incumbent upon us to support this bill, because, in the end, that would be the process.

But I say, again, let's be real here. The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is in a very hotly contested riding. He has, over the last couple of elections, been very, very close in his margins of winning—they've been under 1,000 votes—and he is trying to do what is necessary in order to be able to advocate for the people back home, and he's playing a bit of politics with this himself.

If the Minister of Natural Resources and the Liberal government were intent on changing this, they would have changed it a long time ago. Again, to my friend Mr. Ouellette, the member from wherever—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —I don't know ridings; I'm sorry—if he, as Minister of Natural Resources, was so intent on changing it, he would have, while he was in cabinet, made the changes that could have been done in order to reinstate the black bear hunt. So, come on, a lot of games are being played here. Let's get on with it.

If the government is serious, the real issue we have in northern Ontario is nuisance bears. We need to be able to have the Ministry of Natural Resources deal with nuisance bears in an effective way. If the spring bear hunt can help in managing the amount of bears that we have, that's something that we should be able to look at as well.

I'll be voting for this bill, along with a number of other people in this House, I do suspect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We do have a tradition in this House of addressing people by that—if the member from Toronto Centre, who's not a northern member, knows it's Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Thunder Bay–Superior North, and if a Liberal knows that Jerry Ouellette is from Oshawa, Ed Broadbent's old federal seat, I think the member can learn to address people by their proper—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for the point of order. It's well taken, and I think the member is making note because it's a continued habit.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, you have two minutes.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members who have spoken on this issue.

To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, I will say, once again—I was trying to be kind in my approach. This bear management committee that you have suggested and brought forward: I said, in my earlier remarks, talk to NOSA, talk to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and ask them what they think about your bear management committee, because you know they've ridiculed it completely. I was trying to be fair. I was trying to be gracious. They know what you've done. They know you're being completely political, and I say, again, I don't think you wanted to do it. I don't think you wanted to do it. However, you've done it.

The other thing I would say, in terms of your approach, you implied in your remarks that the Minister of Natural Resources had done something, so this was our

response. Well, the truth is, your bear management committee was debated here before the minister had made any announcement—interesting chronology.

Think about it for a second. You brought your committee here, your motion, your desire to go out and consult with people again, even before the minister had made an announcement. You shouldn't do things like that. You shouldn't do things like that.

Speaker, I want to talk to the implication of being political. If I wanted to be political about the spring bear hunt in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I would have put it in my platform in 2011, or I would have put it in my platform in 2007, or I would have put it in my platform in 2011, but I didn't, because, as I said in my opening remarks, in my first 12 minutes, Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Mauro: It's okay. Just leave him alone.

As I said in my first 12 minutes, I didn't do it, because I knew then the issue couldn't be advanced. We've got a minority Legislature here now. We could advance this issue if we wanted to. If I wanted to be political, I would have played the games that the member ascribes to my motives and put it in my platform in those three elections, and I didn't. I didn't, but I'm doing it now, because we've got a chance to move it forward.

So we'll see what they do, and we'll watch closely, as is NOSA and OFAH and OFA and everybody else.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on the item at the end of private members' business.

METROLINX AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR METROLINX

Mr. Schein moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006 /
Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur
Metrolinx.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, I'm very honoured to stand here today as the MPP for Davenport and to speak on behalf of my community, many folks who have waited around a long time for this debate to happen and who have waited a long time today, in fact, to be here to listen. The passage of Bill 84 would prevent the use of diesel-powered passenger trains on the Union Pearson Express air-rail link and it would help this government do the right thing: electrify the new railway from the beginning.

For many, many years, people in the west end of Toronto have felt that their concerns have been ignored by this government, by Premier Dalton McGuinty and by his transportation minister, Kathleen Wynne; and now by Premier Wynne and by Transportation Minister Glen

Murray. In spite of this, our community has persevered and successfully held this government's feet to the fire. Not long ago, Liberals wouldn't even consider electrification of the air-rail link or the GO network. It was pressure from our community that made them change tracks. It was pressure from our community that forced the government to conduct an electrification study and an environmental assessment to electrify the line. It was pressure from our community that has caused the government and Metrolinx to start talking about the prioritization of electrification of the air-rail link. It's been community members like Rick Ciccarelli and Suri Weinberg from the Clean Train Coalition, who are here today; it's been people like Barb Aufgang, Elizabeth and Bessie, Don Schmidt, Eleanor Batchelder and Brian Holmes—who is here; Samuel Perry, also in the gallery; and groups like the Weston Community Coalition, the Junction Triangle Rail Committee, Friends of the West Toronto Railpath, and TTCriders. It's because of these folks that we've been able to make progress on this issue. Thank you.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind the audience that we welcome your presence, but I would ask you to refrain from joining in the debate in clapping or in any other way.

The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I would like members, though, to recognize the hard work of these people. Putting aside your partisan differences, these people have made this city and this province a better place through their passion.

I would also like to recognize and thank the political leadership of Andrea Horwath, Cheri DiNovo and Rosario Marchese—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: York South—Weston.

Mr. Jonah Schein: That's right—federal MPs like Mike Sullivan, who is here in the gallery today, Olivia Chow, Peggy Nash and, of course, my Davenport brother, MP Andrew Cash, who is also in the gallery here today—thank you—and city councillors like Mike Layton, Gord Perks, Sarah Doucette, Adam Vaughan and Ana Bailão for their support on this issue.

I want to thank our Davenport team, which has worked tirelessly on this issue, especially Victoria Marshall, Jennifer Barrett, Shirley Alvarez, Stephanie Nakitsas and Nora Cole, who are here today. It's a privilege to work with so many great people in our community.

While it has been a long fight, we remain optimistic, because we know that electric trains are better for our health. They're better for the health of our planet, and they would allow us to build a better-integrated transit network.

Building it right the first time will save this province money, it will take more car trips off the road and it will help address gridlock faster. It will reduce noise pollution for people living near the tracks. With the help of members in this gallery today, I hope that we will solidify

support for electrification of this line and we will win a commitment to clean trains now.

Since the plans for the air-rail link were first announced, residents in west Toronto have always said, "Build it once, build it right," and this means electrifying the line from the beginning. It's clear that electrification from day one is the right thing to do. It's the right way to go. According to Toronto Public Health, air pollution from traffic in our city already results in 440 premature deaths and 1,700 hospitalizations every year. Due to pollution, people in Toronto already experience over 1,200 acute bronchitis episodes per year and about 68,000 asthma symptom days. Speaker, the majority of these sufferers are children.

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The mortality-related costs associated with traffic pollution in Toronto are a staggering \$2.2 billion annually. This government currently touts the air-rail link as a way to combat the high cost of pollution by taking cars off the road, but their diesel plan only substitutes one source of pollution for another. At least 300,000 residents live, work and go to school extremely close to the planned air-rail link. There are over 20 schools, 96 day-care centres and four long-term-care facilities, including a respiratory illness care centre that operates within one kilometre of the tracks. The diesel emissions from the UP Express air-rail link will have a direct impact on the health of people in these communities. We know that the long-term impacts of exposure to diesel fumes include cancer, lung disease, asthma and premature death. It's undeniable that regardless of what type of diesel fuel is used to power the UP Express, electric-powered trains are cleaner, quieter and better for the health of surrounding communities.

That is why the Asthma Society of Canada, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario division—why all of these groups support my bill. With the health of our children, seniors and families at risk, I ask this Legislature to commit today to clean trains now. Electric trains are proven not only to emit less air pollution than diesel trains, but they also emit less greenhouse gases than even the highest grade of diesel technology. That is why the Toronto Environmental Alliance supports this bill. To reduce our emissions, to reduce our carbon footprint, we need a commitment in this House to clean trains now.

The GTHA is crippled, as we know, by gridlock that costs our economy \$6 billion a year. Too many of us lose precious time every day that we are stuck in traffic. But by choosing to build an executive service—that's a diesel-powered UP Express—this government will waste a chance to address this growing gridlock crisis.

Metrolinx plans to charge riders \$25 to \$40 per trip on the diesel UP Express, but the Ontario Auditor General raised concerns about this business model. The auditor found that this executive-priced fare is a cost that many people just cannot afford. In fact, nearly 75% of residents in the GTHA, 60% of visitors and 90% of airport

employees who want to ride the air-rail link say they could not afford a ticket at a price of \$22.50 a ride. Surely this air-rail link should serve the thousands of people who work at the airport every day, people like the flight attendant who I met just weeks ago who instead will be forced to commute hours each day on the TTC.

Because of this high ticket price, the auditor called the Metrolinx ridership projections "overly optimistic." The auditor also pointed out that the inconvenience of carrying luggage to and from one of only three available stops will further deter ridership. But because diesel-powered trains cannot start and stop quickly, the diesel plan cannot accommodate more stops on the rail. That is why there are only two additional stops along the way. Without additional stops, experts predict that the air-rail link will not draw high ridership or run at full capacity.

According to Professor André Sorensen, a human geography professor at York University, not only could an electrified UP Express accommodate more stops and increase ridership to and from the airport, but it could also function as an affordable way of building the west-end downtown relief line. Increased ridership could then help lower fares, and the UP Express could then help reduce pressure on subway lines in our cities.

Joell Vanderwagen, a transit activist who has studied transit systems across Canada, has called the current diesel plan "the worst current example of wasted resources and opportunity." She rightfully asks, "What is our purpose? Do we want to move people or build expensive projects? Do we want to relieve congestion or provide lucrative contracts for big consortiums?" She suggests that the air-rail link is an opportunity to use electric trains to provide an integrated regional transit service across the west end of the city and beyond.

Toronto city council understands this. They understand the potential of the air-rail link. That's why on April 10, 2012, council passed a motion for the province to electrify the line, to add additional stops along the route and to ensure an affordable fare—a motion that was supported by Councillor Holyday, and I look forward to his support on this bill today.

Without tearing up roads or digging costly tunnels, electrified train service would benefit local communities, businesses and tourists alike. At a time when transit dollars are in short supply and our transit systems are under immense pressure, we must plan smart transit that moves the most people in the most cost-effective way. Now is not the time to build expensive, elite services that won't meet the real transit needs of our city. The Pan Am Games provide us an opportunity to do the right thing and to reinvest in our city and province, but we need to ensure that the money we spend serves our communities beyond the three-week games and after the athletes and tourists return home.

Over the last few years, we've seen the costly impacts that poor planning can have on our power supply, on our health care and on our transit. Ontarians are growing tired of seeing our public dollars spent on the political interests of the government instead of on the public interest.

This kind of poor planning and cynical politics weakens people's faith in collective action and the political will to make critical public investments. We can't afford to waste our time or money by building the air-rail link the wrong way and then converting it later. To ensure that we're making a wise investment in our province, we need a commitment to clean trains now.

The benefits of electrification are well known. That is why the Liberal government and the regional planning authority, Metrolinx, now claim that they will eventually convert the line from diesel to electric. A few MPPs have also begun to talk about electrifying the air-rail link by 2017—those are Liberal MPPs—but, Speaker, I want to stress to people here today and people who are watching at home that the fact that this government is even considering this now is due to the pressure that you have put on this government and the work that we've done in our communities to put pressure on them. It's about the advocacy that these people have done.

But don't be fooled, because this government has made no official announcement, no official commitment to electrification by 2017 or by any date at all, and that's why there's no mention of electrification by 2017 on any Metrolinx websites at all. That's why, when I asked the minister directly in this House whether he would commit to electrification by 2017, he didn't answer my question directly.

Currently, the only commitment that this government has made is to spend millions of dollars to run hundreds of diesel trains through our neighbourhoods in time to welcome the world to Toronto in 2015 for the Pan Am Games.

Talk about electrification without any firm timeline or commitment to deliver gives our community little reason to believe that we will see an electrified route any time soon.

I urge the government and members from all parties to support my bill and to support a smart and healthy, environmentally safe investment in our province. Let's build the Union-Pearson air-rail link right the first time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 84 and say a few words regarding electrification of the UP Express or air-rail link.

Many of you will know that, like MPP Schein, I support electrification, having introduced my own private member's motion calling on the province to embrace electrification as an environmentally safe means of powering commuter trains and to make the Georgetown corridor a priority for the electrification of commuter trains, as there are a number of high-density neighbourhoods all along it. This motion passed second reading unanimously with all-party support in February 2011. I also voted in favour of each iteration of MPP Schein's bill, and today I will vote in favour of it once more because I support the spirit of this bill.

I would also like to remind everyone here today that the Ontario government has embraced electrification,

contrary to other claims. Our government has made this section of the corridor a priority by committing and allocating funding for a comprehensive electrification EA, which has commenced and which is now welcoming public participation in consultations. While the EA is set to be completed in 2014, the member is correct, the funding towards electrification is not currently in place. I am committed to working on securing funding so that we see more progress towards our common goal.

I would like to step back for a second, Mr. Speaker, and say that in July 2012, I wrote to Bruce McCuaig, president and CEO of Metrolinx, pointing out that Metrolinx had not set a target date for the completion of electrification and, as a result of this, there was much speculation and inaccurate information circulating in the public domain related to the timeline for completion. I therefore requested a target date for the earliest opportunity to have the line electrified while also asking assurance that the EA would be comprehensive in nature and include wide public and community involvement. Local residents must have ample opportunity for input into the design process and the environmental and human health impacts. It is foolish to minimize a process based on science and engineering.

Mr. McCuaig responded that the earliest possible date would be 2017. I have, since then, reiterated the importance of electrification for both my local community and the surrounding Toronto region within my own government and with the various ministers of transportation. I have also written to the federal Minister of Transportation to request federal funding for electrification of this line as a pilot project for a national electrification strategy, so that Canada could become a leader in electrified commuter rail infrastructure and technology.

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I feel it's important that the province begin a more official engagement with the federal government on cost-sharing possibilities. Public transit is vital to Ontario's and Canada's economic prosperity, to advance our jobs, skills and technology economy; therefore, investing in transit infrastructure is not only a provincial responsibility but a national one as well.

Metrolinx calculates that it will complete the environmental assessment sometime in 2014 and estimates a three-year construction delivery period for electrification. In a recent letter that I sent to the Ontario Minister of Transportation, who is here today, I requested that in order to ensure that we stay on track to meet the 2017 target for electrification, the minister take the following undertakings: (1) Seek confirmation from Metrolinx that it's still their intention to complete the EA by 2014; (2) I think it will be important to signal funding in 2014-15 for design and construction relating to electrification—that Metrolinx ensures that the tools and revenue streams it is currently developing include the generation of funds to support the completion of electrification by 2017.

We have been able to see so far, I think, significant developments. My hope is that this will continue. I feel that we must all recognize that significant progress has

been made toward our collective end goal of electrification. As the MPP for York South–Weston, an area with a keen interest in better public transit, I have worked with my entire community over the past six years to be certain that our community can benefit from this project. Together, we have made Weston an UP Express stop, creating potential for economic uplift and revitalization of the community.

We've secured funding for a comprehensive EA on electrification; ensured that construction for the air-rail link and GO expansion take into account the requirements for electrification, and that construction is going on right now; buried commuter trains with tunnelling through parts of the Weston rail corridor, keeping the connectivity of the community—improving the safety and the look of the corridor; secured expansion for the future GO service for local residents; secured a commitment for a new GO station; secured funding for a year-round farmers' market and a cultural hub on John Street; and secured funding towards St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school, that would also be using the surface of the tunnel as a play area. The trains are convertible to electrification, and I think that's one good thing, and the UP Express is publicly funded; it was not in the beginning.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is progress, that the concerns of our communities are being heard, and that there is certainly more work to be done. Bill 84 is a clear indicator of the desire for forward momentum on this project, but it is clear also that we are moving towards an electrified air-rail-link line.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It indeed is a pleasure to speak to the bill from the member for Davenport, who I have some respect for, and his passion for this issue. I commend also the member from York South–Weston, who has also had voice to this issue in this Legislature.

I would say that I'm not directly, in the riding sense, affected by this, but I am a transit user. I take the GO train, I have a Presto card, and I realize that congestion in Ontario today is a problem. I think it's a pleasure to see the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure here today to hear the debate.

It is an important debate. I commend the member for bringing forward the arguments that we as a caucus have looked at. Our critic Mr. Yurek unfortunately had a commitment. He has expressed to me the opportunity to speak to the issue on his behalf, certainly representing our views.

Now, we all know that the bill itself actually does one thing. Specifically, it amends the Metrolinx Act: "5.1 The corporation shall ensure that any passenger railway system established between downtown Toronto and Toronto Pearson International Airport is not powered by diesel fuel." So it takes any of the options off the table. That's substantially the issue here.

Then you look at the other part of it. I think tomorrow, or sometime today, Ms. Anne Golden will issue her

report on the whole Big Move issue, which is a very important issue. The Metrolinx Big Move issue is—I'll just put it in broader terms, how it's connected to this. This is part of it, actually, and it's a \$50-billion wish list—which does affect my riding, to a very modest extent, mainly through more busing, I suppose.

It's not satisfactory, from my point of view, for our riding—but it's \$50 billion that's not funded. There's no money, so Ms. Golden's report tomorrow—I guess it will be tomorrow, because we'll be adjourned, so we won't get to talk about it. Some of these tax tools—the rumour, according to the media, would be something like five cents a litre on gas from everybody in Ontario; that would be earmarked specifically to fund this.

I think that any reasonable analysis of the approach—I would say early that it shows many times, repetitively, that this government has no plan. What I mean by that is that we all agree that electrification is the preferred option, for the reasons that Jonah has made. I again say that there are health implications.

I'll stick to some notes here and put them on the record. "The report cites six key evaluation categories:

"1. Environmental and health benefits, improved air quality, reduced noise and vibration;

"2. User benefits/quality of life, faster acceleration reduces trip times, electric locomotives are more reliable;

"3. Social and community benefits;

"4. Economic benefits such as faster trip times, improvement in the economic competitiveness of the region, enhanced property values;

"5. Financial benefits including lower operating and maintenance cost;

"6. Deliverability."

I think what the bottom line is here is, it really reinforces the old concept that haste makes waste. If you have no plan, you're going nowhere. Without being overtly political, that's the case we find ourselves in.

They want this thing in place for the Pan Am Games, and I think Premier Wynne already envisions cutting the ribbon for the Pan American Games. I don't think there's going to be any election at all. She wants the whole ball game, all the money they're investing. We, in fact, don't know how much they're investing in the Pan Am Games. Some say it's \$1.7 billion. Some say it's \$2 billion. Some say it's \$3 billion.

It's nothing to do with this air-rail link; they want to make sure that we don't embarrass ourselves being a country where the capital city of the largest province in the country has a shabby connection to downtown from our international airport. That's the reality of this thing.

Sometimes I hear that they're kind of blaming the federal government, because most of this stuff is partnership funding. I would say that there are transportation and economic benefits, and there are also smaller environmental and social—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon me. Could you—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Just debate through the Chair. I will deal with the noise.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you. I think they're opposed to this, is what it sounds like to me.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Chair, I'm being interrupted by these people unnecessarily.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carry on, and I'll deal with it.

Mr. John O'Toole: And they're making fun of the bear hunt, which they won't be supporting because they're urban voters—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have order in the House?

Mr. John O'Toole: Anyway, I would only say that city council passed a motion on April 11, 2012, stating that it preferred electrification. The vote carried 35 to 7. Among those supporting the motion, you should know, were Mayor Rob Ford, Doug Ford, Mike Del Grande, Denzil Minnan-Wong and Karen Stintz.

I said previously that Ms. Albanese sponsored a private member's bill on February 2011 calling for electrification. It passed on a voice vote; our transportation critic spoke complementarily at that time, and voted in favour of it as well.

We understand the importance of this. I'm pretty sure that, when it comes down to it, to be very candid with you, the government has no plan. That's why we're in a dilemma. They're going to go ahead, and I believe they're going to go ahead with the diesel option. I'm completely convinced of that, because of the timing.

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Not only do they not have the \$50 billion; they don't have the billion dollars that this electrification costs. That's the dilemma in Ontario, whether it's in our health care system, our transit system, in congestion, in loss of jobs in Ontario, or the whole mess they've made of the electricity file.

This government, to me, in a broader sense—through you, Mr. Speaker—is pathetic at planning and great about talking. They promised things during the election. It's pathetic. I listed them this morning: nine commitments they made about the environment and health care. They have failed on every single one.

The people suffering today are seniors and vulnerable people. Why? Because of wasteful spending by this government of \$1.2 billion—\$1.2 billion—spent to save seats in an election. That's the truth of the government that's going to have the final say on this. You have the most members; you'll have the final say on this. The minister is here. You haven't got the money to do it, and you're trying to make it look like we're the ones that are the problem. That's not the case here.

I say to the NDP, the case here is, you're working with partners, because you propped them up—they are wasting money, and you are supporting them. They're doing the same wedge on you on the bear hunts issue as well.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: In fairness, I think we have another member that wants to maybe say a few things.

I'll get back on track here. On Bill 84, the cost-benefit analysis that I've seen indicates the total cost of electrification, the UPE strategy, is an estimated \$900 million. It's going to be infrastructure that's going to be ripped up and done another way. Both the capital side as well as the operational side will be all different. You'll have more station stops because electrification accommodates that easily.

An estimated cost savings of potentially \$18 million a year is also being ignored—because electrification would be better. I don't think that includes the health benefit analysis as well of taking all the particulate matter out of the diesel option.

The payoff is over a 50-year period, and I put to you that the transit system in all of Ontario, certainly in my riding—I'm meeting, I believe next week, with Metrolinx for my riding. They have a plan in my riding, in the last few minutes I have, that's quite pathetic. Some 600,000 people live in Durham. Our transit system is buses. That's the option. The parking: Most of the people that are in Oshawa at the end of the line, and I've said to the minister and I hope the minister is listening, and this is tied to this—again, no plan. What they want to do is to take the current train on the CN Rail system and move it to the north side of 401, all part of intensification for urban space. It's on the CP Rail, which doesn't have enough track bed going across bridges and that. It would have to be double-tracked to handle it, because it's primarily a freight track. Where they want to put it, there is no parking. There is no parking there; they would have to tear down half the city to have parking where they're proposing to have this station. I put on the table a less expensive—in fact, Metrolinx has told me it would save probably \$300,000 to \$400,000 to leave it on the south side, leave it on the CN tracks, take it to Courtice, and the problem would be solved; there would be no congestion.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: To answer the member from Ottawa—Orléans, I take rail. Do you? I use rail. Do you? You talk about your own concerns in the province. You talk about your own issues. I'll talk about my issues. Okay? Thanks for listening.

Here's the point: This is another case where the government doesn't give you the whole story. I can tell you now that they're not going to electrify it. It's them that's doing it. It's not Tim Hudak. We voted for it. I hope you leave here today knowing that, even if this private motion passes—if it passes, you can blame them. That's exactly who you blame, and don't let them off the hook, because they do it every time—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know it's always tempting, when we have an audience here, to speak directly at the crowd and engage them. But you just asked that people not participate; we're supposed to address our comments

to you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe we could have the member do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I'd ask the member to bring his comments back to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to take a few minutes to sort of simmer down a bit, because I get immensely engaged in these things. I'd like to thank them for coming. Thank you for your participation.

I had the privilege of being the transportation critic some time ago. I do watch the file. I think it's important. This decision is a last-minute attempt for the member to represent the concerns of his riding. I respect that; that's the purpose of private members' business. In that vein, I support the intent, but the logistics of it all is a mistake that was made some time ago by this government, and a lack of a plan. They have the same lack of a plan—and it's so cynical. In my riding, they cancelled two new-build nuclear plants—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would caution the speaker that that has nothing to do with this railway.

Mr. John O'Toole: It does relate to this. I'll say this: The reason I say these things is the lack of a plan, which ties to this. The reason no one here is even talking about it—they went ahead with a poorly conceived plan and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham, would you please speak to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. John O'Toole: I am speaking to the bill. This bill is about a plan to put in electrification of the link to the Pearson airport. Why are we doing this at the last minute? Mr. Speaker, do you know anything about this bill? Do you really?

Hon. David Zimmer: Do you?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I certainly do.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm trying to help you simmer down.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Zimmer has crossed the floor here, and he's the minister—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to Bill 84, a bill presented by my friend and colleague who has been relentless, unflagging and persistent on this file. He hasn't given up hope that he can persuade this government to do the right thing.

It has been difficult, if not challenging, if not downright impossible to persuade this government to do the right thing from the start, which is what we pressed this government to do three or four years ago. Many who are here in the audience watching, observing, listening to this debate said, "We have done so many studies. We could have done this right. We can still do it right and do it today." The only commitment that we have from this government, the only clear commitment, is diesel. That is the only clean, clear commitment that they have made, and that is that they are clearly committed to diesel. They should be proud to say it, because that's what they've

done. Instead of pretending they're for electrification, they should be proud to say, "We went with diesel and we're proud." Yet this is the same government that keeps saying, "We got rid of coal. Ain't this great? Ain't this grand? And we are the only province that has done that. We have introduced the Green Energy Act. We're the greenest party in Canada." Yet they proudly have introduced diesel instead of electrifying this air-rail link.

How do you explain it? How do you explain this contradiction? Liberals can, and they will continue to say it over and over again—and there will be other speakers soon, but I tell you, I'm going to make some comments at the end, because I think the member from Durham is right on a couple of things. I'll try to get to them if I have time at the end.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Willowdale, it's so good to see you.

I want to talk a bit about electrification. The member from Davenport has spoken much about the benefits, and the health benefits in particular, but I wanted to talk about electrification as well in terms of what it means, because electrification means lighter trains that can start and stop more quickly and efficiently. You can either add more stations without increasing total travel time or you can safely add more trains and reduce headway as well as travel time. A Transport Action Ontario report shows that you could double the number of stations along the electrified GO train corridor, serving many more people, without increasing trip times.

In other words, electrification is essential to bring in fast, frequent, all-day, two-way express rail service to more people living near GO rail corridors. This would increase ridership, fare revenues, and reduce congestion by giving more commuters a reason to choose transit over the car.

A Toronto Region Board of Trade report noted that the GTHA actually has extensive rail infrastructure, but it is underused. A report this week by the Neptis Foundation agrees the Union Pearson Express is a high priority project, but also says Metrolinx must aggressively accelerate plans to electrify the GO train network and upgrade to frequent, all-day rail service. In 2008, upgrading the GO rail network in this way was listed as Metrolinx's number one priority.

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The Golden transit panel's report today said electrification of the GO rail network was an essential evolution, with particular emphasis on the Union Pearson Express, and said the two-way, all-day GO rail service was one of these three top transit priorities. Yet electrification barely gets a mention in Metrolinx's latest five-year plan, and frequent, all-day rail service has been given a 15- to 25-year timeline for implementation.

In Brampton, GO train customers can spend 1.5 hours each way sitting on the steps of a crowded GO train, but earlier this year, the folks in Brampton learned that the frequent all-day GO train services would be delayed, perhaps for decades.

Municipal leaders outside Toronto have been asking why they should pay more for transit when there has been so little movement in bringing frequent, all-day GO services to their areas. We can do more. We should be doing more.

When Metrolinx and the government claim that we will electrify this air-rail link, one is left to wonder whether it will happen. Various members speak about the fact that it may happen and dates are given, but as the member from Durham noted, he's doubtful, and sometimes I am equally doubtful as well.

If you're going to do this, do it right and move fast. Don't say you're going to do it at some point in the future, because a whole lot of us tend not to believe it. And the whole issue of trust is a big part of what citizens worry about, and not just in terms of this party, but others as well. Trust is a big factor. So I say to you, if we're going to do it, do it right. The member from Davenport has done this relentlessly and he hasn't given up hope, and I hope he's right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, sometimes I feel like I'm on a Monty Python rerun, for those of us who are old. The third party used to yell at me because I was politically interfering with the sacred Metrolinx plan of which we could not touch a hair on its head. Your leader actually called me erratic and really unpleasant names that hurt my feelings, and I thought she was kind of a nice person. She did that, and I've gotten over it, but now you want us to intercede in Metrolinx to change the fundamentals and the priorities, which you now think are wrong-headed.

So I would just ask the third party to make up your mind. Do you want us, as legislators, to be involved in determining transportation priorities more granularly, or do you want us to believe that we have the Ten Commandments: They're perfect, they're the word of God and we shall not mess with the order?

I would suggest to you that there's a happy compromise: that we, the people in the electorate, should not become transit planners, but when it comes to economic and health outcomes, moderate and reasonable interventions make sense.

Mr. Speaker, I have explained this a few times. Where do I depart with my friend from Davenport? I go back to the member from Timmins—James Bay who accused my friend from Thunder Bay—Atikokan of having some nasty agenda that had something to do with him getting re-elected. Well, I have a sense that the people over there actually want to get re-elected as well.

This seems to me to be one of the most parochial political issues. If there is any issue that I think has been trivialized in some ways—not by the residents, not by the people who have those concerns, but by the third party—it is this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I live half a block from the CN, CP and GO main line. We have increased rapid transit there, the GO line, from 137 trains to 400 trains a day, increasing it

to half-hour service. Those are not tier 3 diesels that run at 25% of the emissions. Those are full, hard-on industrial diesels that go up and down those rail lines with the full weight of the freight system in this country.

There are two elementary schools—Market Lane and St. Michael—that have very young children as young as four years old who go to school a half a block from a diesel train. It amazes me starkly that this party cares not at all. This is a party whose leader announced today that it will not support any of the recommendations in the Golden report or the funding formula. This is the party that wants to defeat us in the next budget on the only funding to \$50 billion.

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order.

Interjection: You can't make a point of order from the wrong seat.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's right.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So what are we trying to do? We would like to electrify the entire GO system. We have said over and over again that the technology is changing. I have met with some of the folks and directly said to some of you that there are Canadian companies like Hydrogenics and Ballard. We are going through a dramatic shift in the United States and in Germany. That system is onboard electric systems that are hydrogen-based in many cases. We would refuel those electric vehicles overnight, when we have an electric surplus between 2 and 4 in the morning.

There is a study group going on right now between Metrolinx and that to look at launching a pilot project before 2017 on the Union-Pearson express line. We will hopefully, within six months, have the viability. It will cost to operate those trains 40% less than the conventional train.

The only proposal from the third party is an external gantry system that, as the member from Durham pointed out, would cost a billion dollars—a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. We would like to see aggressive electrification. We would like to catch up with the new technologies. What you've been proposing are systems that would almost double the cost of the existing transit systems.

We're doing Eglinton. It's electrification. They don't support that. We're extending Spadina. They don't support that. We have 15 different projects, and what the NDP are telling people is that it's a free ride—garage sale transit.

We're going to buy our transit equipment. It is a \$50-billion capital. We have an opportunity historically between our two parties to actually complete the biggest transit build, and we will lose every vote in here because the third party does its deals with the opposition party that fills in subways, rather than negotiating an agreement with us to actually come up with a funding formula.

The leader of the third party never negotiates with us. She says to our leader, "Oh, well. You come up with another set of ideas on how to fund transit and I'll tell you whether I like them or not." This reminds me of the deal that the federal NDP did with the Tories that brought

down a Liberal government on national child care and national transit strategies. If you care about electrification, let's deliver an electrification system for everyone and start telling people the truth.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would move unanimous consent to give that member another five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Wow. Where do I start? Let's start with the meeting that I had—and remember, this is not the first time that this bill has been tabled. We tabled a motion before the member from York South–Weston, again, which was supported by the Conservatives, I'll remind the Conservatives; it was even supported by the mayor, Rob Ford. Who knows what he was smoking? But he supported it—to electrify. And then we had a meeting, Rick Ciccarelli of Ontario Clean Train and myself, with the Minister of Transport, at which time, in front of witnesses, he said to us, “We are going to be electrifying by 2017. I can't promise, but we are.”

Today—typical Liberal—we hear something quite different. And what do we hear? We hear, “It's really awful on the east-west line. They're running on diesel. So it's going to be awful on the air-rail link.” That's the justification. We're building a new air-rail link, but because it's so bad in other systems, because the transit system is so messed up after 10 years of them being in office, “Why should we prioritize yours?”

1700

Let me tell you why: tens of thousands of signatures on petitions that have said, among other things, that no other major city in the world—let me repeat that: no other city in the world—is investing in diesel for a major line like this. Let me tell you what else: Diesel is linked up there with arsenic, asbestos, mustard gas and tobacco. That's how dangerous diesel is. If they're going to respond about tier 4, let me tell you that tier 4 only cuts that by about 50%.

We don't need another study; we're getting another study. Metrolinx has already done an assessment. The assessment is unequivocal: It has to be electric.

I feel sorry for the member from York South–Weston because she has been sold out by her cabinet and sold out by her Premier, who is clearly not interested in what she has to say and clearly not interested in the health of people in her region. She has had, ever since she was elected—Mr. Speaker, I've been here for almost eight years, and this has been an issue for a good seven of them. Yet still we hear over there, “Maybe sometime. Oh, there's new technology. We're going to wait for the new technology.” How about not using the old technology? How about that? How about just doing it right? How about doing it by 2015?

Let's look at the reality. This is even carrying the athletes to the so-called green games. For the so-called green games, we will be transporting wealthy tourists at a

cost of between \$20 and \$40 a ticket from the airport to Union Station, bypassing lots of individuals, lots of residents and constituents who need affordable transportation, which we do not have.

Yes, our leader doesn't negotiate with Mr. Murray. Oh, too bad. Come on. In what world does this minister live? Oh my goodness, give me a break. We went to see you, and you made some commitments to us. You didn't carve them in stone and you're not funding them—that's important. Clearly, what comes out of the minister's mouth in one instance is not what comes out of the minister's mouth in another.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Point of order: I made a very clear commitment—the member's right—that we would do a demonstration project and initiate electrification. I think she's effectively calling me a liar and I think that's unparliamentary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. That's not a point of order.

Carry on.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: That's not what I said. I never said anything like it. I would love to read the transcripts of that meeting because we have witnesses here.

Bottom line, the member from Davenport is correct. There is no funding allocated to it; we need funding allocated. To the member from York South–Weston, there's no funding, there's no plan. If there's no plan and no funding, it ain't going to happen. It ain't going to happen without funding and a plan.

I would love to see that plan. I would challenge my friend the Minister of Transportation to table that plan—to actually table his plan, their plan, the Liberals' plan, for the electrification, the date on which it's going to happen, how it's going to happen, how much it's going to cost and what the engineering concerns are. Just put it on the table. Just make it real in any way, shape or form.

To the folk who have come here, to the thousands of people who have signed our petitions in our ridings, to the member from Davenport, to all the children and the schools that are along that line that are going to be breathing in the diesel fumes, what we say is, another day, another Liberal promise, and still no Liberal action. Instead of electrification, we get promises. Instead of reality, we get fantasy. Instead of electric trains in 2015, we get diesel. That's the reality. That's the fact. That's what we're working with.

Until we're working with something else except vague conversation, Mr. Speaker, one has to go out to our constituents and, quite frankly, tell them the truth. We're going to tell our constituents and your constituents the truth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thanks again to our guests for coming today. Thanks to the people who spoke to the bill: the member from York South–Weston, the member

from Durham, the member from Trinity–Spadina, the Minister of Transportation and the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Electrification is not controversial. Every single person in this chamber knows that it's the right thing to do. The only thing that's controversial is the fact that this government has not listened to anybody sensible in this province for five years at least—probably seven or eight years—and it has chosen to build a new transit plan that uses 20th-century technology. They have wasted an opportunity to build smart transit and clean transit, and they're putting people's health at risk. The fact that this government would now, at this point, 10 years after first being elected, put up their hands and ask us to believe that something is going to change or point their fingers at the federal government is beyond belief.

We know that our city has not had the investment in public transit for decades, and we're all paying the cost of that right now. When we have an opportunity to invest, we should do it the right way. So I've brought this bill here for debate, and I'm glad that we've had some positive feedback. I hope that the members of the opposition will support this bill, that they understand this is a colossal waste of money; I hope that we'll have their support. It's an opportunity for the government to do the right thing: to put people in this province first, to put people in our city first and not to put a prestige project that will serve people for three weeks of games first. It makes no sense.

They have an opportunity to pass this bill today, which simply says, do it right the first time; don't move forward with the diesel plan. There's no equivocating about this. You can vote yes or no. I hope that I'll have your support when we vote on this in just a couple of minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PAVED SHOULDER CONSTRUCTION AND BICYCLING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CONSTRUCTION D'ACCOTEMENTS STABILISÉS ET LA CIRCULATION DES BICYCLETTES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 67, standing in the name of Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 137, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and the Highway Traffic Act to construct paved shoulders and permit bicycles to ride on them.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: The social policy committee, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the social policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT ACT (SPRING BEAR HUNT), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON ET DE LA FAUNE (CHASSE À L'OURS PRINTANIÈRE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Mauro has moved second reading of Bill 114, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 to provide for a spring bear hunt.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j)—the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: General government, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member wishes the bill to be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

METROLINX AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR METROLINX

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Schein has moved second reading of Bill 84, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1709 to 1714.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask all members to take their seats?

Mr. Schein has moved second reading of Bill 84, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Jaczek, Helena	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Schein, Jonah
Bradley, James J.	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique

Forster, Cindy
Hatfield, Percy

Natyshak, Taras
O'Toole, John

Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Hardeman, Ernie
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hunter, Mitzie
Jeffrey, Linda
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McKenna, Jane
McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Milloy, John
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sergio, Mario
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 24; the nays are 36.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, His Honour awaits.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took his seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

Hon. David C. Onley (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

An Act to proclaim First Responders Day / Loi proclamant le Jour des premiers intervenants.

An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month / Loi proclamant le mois d'avril Mois du patrimoine sikh.

An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

An Act to proclaim Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises / Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation au monoxyde de carbone et modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour prévoir des exigences en matière de protection contre la présence, dans des lieux, de niveaux dangereux de monoxyde de carbone.

An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne le commissaire aux services en français.

An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Barreau et la Loi sur les procureurs.

An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day / Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln Alexander.

An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario.

An Act respecting the Ontario Institute of Professional Agrologists.

An Act to revive Kingsgate II Limited.

An Act to revive Kingsgate III Limited.

An Act to revive Kingsgate IV Limited.

An Act to revive Westmount Ridge Associates Limited.

An Act to revive Senchura Holdings Ltd.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur sanctionne ces projets de loi.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I am pleased to recognize a few special guests attending this afternoon's royal assent ceremony. As guests of the Lieutenant Governor, we are pleased to acknowledge members of the Free the Children organization. Under the direction of the Kielburger brothers, Free the Children has challenged our youth to make the world a better place, and we are pleased to have them attend today's special ceremony. Welcome.

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, I want to recognize student usher Teshini, who disciplined me for having a conversation with you when I wanted to alert you to a point of order that I wanted to make to recognize Adam Yahn, the senior legislative adviser to the leader of

the official opposition, for his work in this place; and Christine Bujold, the press secretary to the PC caucus. To those folks who help us do our work in this place, I want to extend my appreciation and the appreciation of our caucus to them. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, we should also recognize those who have served exceedingly well in the past, and I would like to recognize Jeffrey Kroeker, who was an assistant for the Conservative caucus.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my last introduction for this session, but I'd like to introduce my good friend the young Shafiq Qadri to the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: On a point of order, I'd like to introduce or to welcome, on this special occasion of the royal assent of the Sikh Heritage Month Act, some members of the Sikh community here today, including the Canadian Sikh Association, my brother, Gurratan Singh, and some other wonderful people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: On a point of order, I'd like to officially welcome members of Parliament Andrew Cash and Mike Sullivan, and my mom, Laura Schein, to our Parliament today.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge says, "No more points of order," and I agree with him.

Orders of the day? Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Seeing that it's the last day of the House, I want to wish every one of you a happy holiday season. See you in the new year.

Before we all leave, for a second time today, if we could just say thanks to the pages, who have done a fine job.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until February 18, 2014.

The House adjourned at 1734.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
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Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
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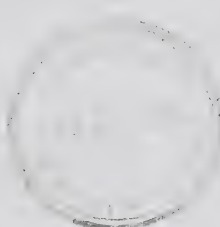
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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 18 February 2014

Mardi 18 février 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 February 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Welcome back. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I first of all want to thank members of the Legislature for agreeing to have my leadoff on this bill deferred. I have been looking forward to participating in debate on Bill 141.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member, I have to confirm that this is your leadoff.

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, if you don't trust me, Speaker, you might check with the Clerk, but it is my leadoff, yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's precisely what I'm doing, but I was asked to make sure that, because of the stand-down, this was it. So the clock will stop and reset. The member from Newmarket–Aurora, on the lead.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I am pleased to participate in this, my leadoff, on debate of Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013.

Speaker, there were a number of issues that I raised in the very few minutes that I had when the minister introduced this bill, and I indicated at that time—in fact, I had asked for unanimous consent for the government to allow me some more time than the 30 seconds that I had to actually respond. That was denied by the government and so, fortunately, we're now here, and I'd ask those watching by parliamentary channel to settle in because we're in for an hour's debate here. I do commit to take my full hour because there's a great deal to be said about this

issue and the important priority that infrastructure should have with the government of Ontario.

Hon. David Zimmer: And does have.

Mr. Frank Klees: The member opposite has already started his heckling, the Liberal member, and I haven't even started. Although we can't name members, Mr. Zimmer, who—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'll leave that to you, Speaker.

So we have a bill here that, according to the minister when he made his introductory remarks, is to establish a mechanism to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning for the province of Ontario. He indicated that underlying this legislation was the objective to support job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and to incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning. I want to say at the very outset, Speaker, that I and my colleagues in the official opposition fully support every one of those principles.

I will be the first one to say that I believe, when it comes to the important issue of infrastructure in this province, that this is a policy that should be beyond politics. I have said for many years that when it comes to making a commitment to an infrastructure project, assuming that it has been planned and prioritized properly, once the decision has been made to invest in that infrastructure project, it should be beyond political interference from that point on. There should be no such thing as a stop and start to these programs, which is why we have a serious problem in the province of Ontario today, that, whether it was transit, whether it was the construction of roads, the minute that a new administration came into office, whether that was at the provincial level, whether it was at the federal level or municipal level, the political tug of war started to take place. Those who had the strongest voice in terms of "I don't want that project in my backyard" or "I think that it's more important to build a transitway here rather than there"—what took place in this province and continues to take place is that those with the loudest voices get heard and important infrastructure projects are stalled.

So we can talk as much as we want in this place on behalf of our constituents and argue that gridlock is our top priority, but until we get to the point here in this Legislature of putting in place legislation that actually will lift the decisions about whether those infrastructure projects get implemented, get built and financed in the long term without interference, we'll continue to fail the people of this province.

To start, I want to speak to one issue that the minister has raised in this bill which I agree with, and that's the need for long-term planning for infrastructure. In his bill, the minister made reference to the importance of having an inventory of our infrastructure assets in this province. I agree. In fact, he makes reference to the fact that infrastructure planning and investment should take into account, of course, applicable budgets or fiscal plans. He indicates in this legislation that the planning and investment should take a long-term view, that decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of, among other things, demographic and economic trends. He indicated that it's important that infrastructure planning and investment should foster innovation by creating opportunities to make use of innovative technologies, services and practices, particularly where doing so would utilize technology, techniques and practices developed in Ontario. Again, I fully support the objective that the minister has set out in this legislation.

0910

But I want to talk about the issue of the inventory of our assets. Speaker, we cannot make an intelligent decision and a responsible decision about which infrastructure projects should be prioritized if we don't know the existing infrastructure inventory and its state of repair or disrepair. Speaker, whether it's a provincial politician or politicians at the local municipal level, when an announcement is made that new infrastructure funds will be available, it's very easy to immediately identify the high-profile projects within the community, within the province, that will give us the biggest bang for our buck politically. And so all too often when announcements are made for new infrastructure funding, we default to announcing or prioritizing a project within our community that's going to give the biggest public relations kick to us, that we can cut the ribbons on, that we can get the accolades on—and particularly if we are nearing the crazy season called elections. As we all know, the closer we get to an election, the more compromising the decisions can become, not in terms of what is the most important infrastructure project, but what is the most important politically beneficial project for me. And so we hear about the infrastructure deficit in this province.

We know that under the streets of the city of Toronto, or any other municipality in the GTA and across the province, there is an invisible infrastructure that is being ignored by far too many who have been placed in positions of responsibility to ensure that that important infrastructure is protected. Speaker, I'm talking about the pipes that deliver the drinking water to our communities. I'm talking about the waste water management system that is invisible, that is underground, that we count on. And the only time there is real evidence that that infrastructure, that invisible infrastructure, is being ignored is when we have circumstances such as happened in the city of Toronto just within the last few months, where we see systems backing up, people's basements and homes filling up with water. Why? Because that invisible infrastructure has been neglected and it's incapable of hand-

ling those issues, those storms that may only happen once every 50 years, maybe only once every 100 years. But that's why long-term planning is important and that's why people get elected: to make those decisions.

And yes, it may be that sometimes that new library, as nice as it would be to be able to construct that new library—sometimes the decision may have to be made by that council, by the ministry of the provincial government or by the ministry of the federal government that, no, that project is not a priority in your community because we have evidence that there is a crumbling infrastructure that should, in fact, be prioritized.

We have an example here in the city of Toronto. We hear what's happening to the Gardiner Expressway—a lot of debate. Here is what's disturbing about that one particular infrastructure investment. We have it on good authority that hundreds of millions of dollars have, over the years, been put aside for the maintenance of that important piece of infrastructure, and millions of dollars have not been spent on in fact maintaining it, and so we are now in a crisis situation. And what could have cost us a few million to properly maintain it over the years is now going to be a multi-million- and perhaps billion-dollar problem that we have to address.

How do we deal with it? Well, the minister rightfully—I want to commend him—made reference to asset management. We have had that discussion. What concerns me is that the legislation that we have before us speaks about it in a broad framework sense, but there is nothing here that is substantive that is going to change anything, after this legislation is passed, from the circumstances we have today. We have talked for years in this Legislature about the importance of asset management. Everybody agrees that it's important.

To the credit of the Ministry of Transportation, a number of years ago they partnered with the Good Roads Association to put in place an asset management program, primarily focused on bridges, in the province. The ministry invested—I understand that currently the investment is up to some \$750,000. Good Roads has made their contribution and is managing that process. There are a number of municipalities that are part of that program and they're benefiting from it.

Here is the problem: I also understand that Good Roads has now had a number of meetings with, certainly, the former minister; I believe they've met with the current minister as well, twice. I have made a written submission to the minister as well, supporting Good Roads in their request for additional funding to ensure that that asset management program is fully extended across the province, is made available to all municipalities, and is expanded beyond the asset of bridges, because the same principle, the same platform, can be used for other infrastructure assets in our province. Unless something's changed since the last time I've had communication on this, the ministry has essentially shut that file down from the standpoint of saying, "There's no more money. We're not going to carry on." Speaker, that's our problem.

There are partial solutions. It's not that people in the province—whether it's municipalities, whether it's pro-

professionals, whether it's politicians, there's never an issue in most cases of understanding what the problem is and what the solution is. The big gap exists between making the pronouncement and developing a solution and actually implementing it. That's the problem. We have, in the case of asset management, a strong organization that is province-wide that is willing to take the lead. We have the technology, and all that is missing is the minister stepping in and saying, "Yes, we will fund this in the same way; there has to be a long-term, 10-year plan for infrastructure." The asset management program that underlies that infrastructure program also has to be part of that long-term planning.

But, Minister, along with planning comes providing the resources. What we can't do is mandate an asset management program and then say to the municipalities, "You have to pay for it." I believe this should be a partnership, and the partnership should be the federal government, the provincial government and municipalities. But it is only the province of Ontario that can, through legislation, make an asset management program mandatory. I'm advising the minister that I will be bringing forward an amendment to his legislation that will, in fact, add that word "mandatory" into the legislation so that it actually has some teeth. I believe that that is so fundamental to dealing with the infrastructure crisis that we have in the province of Ontario that I'm going to appeal to the minister, to my colleagues on all sides of the House, to look at this very, very seriously. If there's anything that we do in this Legislature over the next number of months to ensure that the province of Ontario will be properly served by us on the infrastructure file, it will be that we put in place a mandatory asset management program province-wide that will apply not only to municipal infrastructure assets but to provincial infrastructure assets as well.

0920

Speaker, I'd like to move on to another issue, and that is the legislation dealing with the issue of the long-term plan. I struggle with this. Again, as I say, I support the minister's initiative, and I support what is in this legislation when it talks about the importance of putting in place a 10-year strategy and a 10-year infrastructure plan. What is puzzling to me is why it's going to take three years to put a 10-year plan in place. I don't know what this government has been doing for the last 10 years.

We've had proclamation after proclamation now, from three different ministers who have had responsibility for this file. They talk about putting in place a long-term plan, they talk about putting in place reliable and sustainable funding for infrastructure, and here we are 10 years later. Once again, we have a document, a legislative framework, that is telling us that it's important to have a 10-year plan, but the government is saying it'll take them three years to put the 10-year plan together.

Now, who isn't frustrated by that? How can we blame our municipal partners for being cynical about what goes on here and what is being proclaimed in this place? Perhaps the public can be fooled by headlines. This gov-

ernment has been so good at redrafting press releases, at restaging public announcements and at marching their ministers out into wonderful backdrops to make another pronouncement that was made two years before, two years before that and two years before that. It's like it's news all over again.

Ms. Catherine Fife: But it never happens.

Mr. Frank Klees: But it never happens—not a shovel in the ground. Speaker, I'm not sure how to deal with this, because—and my friends in the press gallery are not going to be happy with me for this—I don't understand why the media isn't holding the government to account every time they get a press release where they know full well the only things that have been changed are the date and the name of the minister. Why is it not that the press gallery holds these people accountable and exposes them for what's going on? The only reason the public isn't holding the government to account is because they're too busy to do that kind of work. They're too busy to keep track of where those announcements were, when they took place and under which ministers' names that old announcement was uncovered, re-presented, repackaged and respun. With all due respect, I'm going to challenge our press gallery to do some research on the announcements from the Minister of Infrastructure, from the Minister of Transportation, and his predecessors. It'll be quite some revealing exercise. What have we been getting for our investment in government for the last 10 years, other than a bunch of retreaded announcements that have made things ever worse for us?

So what is it going to take? Well, I think it will take holding this government to account. I am hoping that the leader of the third party is serious. I read in the media this morning that Ms. Horwath has sent a letter to the Premier essentially drawing a line in the sand, saying, "I want to put you on notice that we are not going to play this game anymore." You know, I don't agree with probably most of what Andrea Horwath wants to do to this province in terms of giving the till away and spending money we don't have, but here is what I do agree with her on. This is from the Toronto Star—and, by the way, I tried to get a copy of Ms. Horwath's letter today before the debate, and I was told that they're still reformatting. So as soon as I get it, I'll share it with you. But obviously the Toronto Star had it before anyone else did. I'm not sure how that happens, but here is what the Toronto Star said the NDP leader wrote. Do any members of the NDP have a copy of their leader's letter?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, we didn't bring it with us.

Mr. Frank Klees: They don't, Speaker.

Here is what Toronto Star said the leader wrote: "I will not support any new taxes, tolls or fees that hit middle-class families." You know what? Quite frankly, I think people in this province are overtaxed, and when we look at the waste that this government has allowed to take place under their watch over the last 10 years, Speaker, and whether—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: The Minister of Health just identified herself here. She didn't like where I'm going be-

cause she knows full well that what I'm going to say is that one of those areas of waste, lack of accountability and lack of transparency is her own file, the Ornge file. She also won't like the fact that we know that that kind of waste continues in another one of her files, the eHealth file. We also know that if, in fact, the Auditor General were to check up on any other area or department in her ministry, he would find that there are other multi-, multi-millions of dollars of waste taking place because of a lack of oversight, a lack of accountability and a lack of transparency. We know that that's taking place across this government.

So our position is, no, Madam Wynne, you don't immediately, knee-jerk, go back into the pockets of hard-working taxpayers in this province. What you do, first of all, is you line your ministers up and you say, "Do your job on behalf of the people of this province. Be accountable and ensure that your ministry is doing its job. Be accountable to the taxpayers." Then you go to your bureaucrats and you say, "Be accountable and, by the way, if you're not, there are consequences." And what should happen, based on the evidence, is that the whole bunch of the ministers should resign. They should then ask their deputies to resign and their assistant deputies to resign and keep going until you get to the point where people in this province and the bureaucrats in this government actually understand that there is accountability and that there will be consequences for people who don't do their job.

But that isn't the way this government does business, Speaker. Here is what they do: "Well, it's just another billion. It's just another billion. We'll shuffle the chairs. We'll move one minister to the other."

Hon. John Milloy: I heard Montgomery Burns give that speech in *The Simpsons*.

Mr. Frank Klees: You see, they consider that's very funny, right? I would suggest, Speaker, that the government House leader, whose job is to defend the indefensible every day in this House—why? Because the ministers are afraid to stand up on their own two feet and defend themselves. And so they defer to the government House leader—and the people of the province are getting tired of this—to get up and read his speaking notes that say nothing about the issue and that continue to deflect what is important to the people of this province, and that is that their tax dollars are treated with respect, that the people who work for them in the government of Ontario do so with accountability and that ministers of this government take responsibility.

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There has not been a minister in this government who has shown any sense of remorse for what has taken place in their ministry wasting multi-millions of tax dollars. In the meantime, what have we got? Back in our constituency offices, we are dealing with families who are being told by ministers of the crown, "I'm sorry; there's not enough money to ensure that your autistic child has the kind of support and care that they need."

We're being told in our constituency offices, by families and by seniors, that essential home care that was

provided for them in their retirement homes, that was provided for them in their own homes through home care, in seniors' homes, in long-term-care homes—they are calling us in our constituency offices saying, "We're being told that essential home care services can no longer be continued." They're being asked to help the government by rationing the kind of home care support services that they're getting.

We're being told that people in our constituencies who are in desperate need of cancer care drugs are being told, "No, we're not going to make a political decision about saving your life. We're going to leave that to a bureaucratic organization. If it means that you're being told that you can't have the life-saving cancer care drug, then so be it, because we're doing the honourable thing as government by not interfering."

Speaker, the last time I looked, you and I got elected by people in our ridings to advocate for them, to intervene for them, on the issues that matter to them. When it gets to the point where government ministers—and backbenchers, who often don't have the courage to stand up for their constituents against the ministers who they know are doing the wrong thing—when it gets to that point, we know that we have a government that has lost the trust, the confidence and the authority to be there. I believe the day is coming very soon when the people in this province will have an opportunity to make a decision about whether or not the kind of excuses, the lack of accountability, the lack of transparency—whether they want that type of government to continue.

It's a rhetorical question. I don't have to answer it. We heard a poll, as recently as this morning, that 70% of the people in this province believe that another political party should take control of this government. The 30% are, without question, the families of the ministers and the backbenchers here, and the people who are afraid. You see, 30%—that will be the rest of the bureaucrats who are afraid to have the light of accountability shone into their departments. The rest of the bureaucrats, the efficient ones, the responsible ones—and there are millions—are with us. They're with the 70% of people in this province who have concluded, without the help of the media, that it's time for a change in this province.

Anyway, let me get back to this bill. I want to make a specific reference to the principles that are outlined here in the bill. It talks about how projects should be prioritized; this is under section 6 of the legislation. I'm going to read from the bill because I think it's important, again, to emphasize that this is an area that I fully support. I believe my colleagues do as well.

I want to speak to how easy it is to craft legislation that sounds good but is absolutely meaningless. That's why it's so frustrating for some of us in this place as we stand up to debate legislation. We spend 20 minutes or 30 minutes or an hour, and essentially we're preaching to the converted here. The minister knows it's meaningless because what he'll do when it's all over is, he'll take great pride in having another piece of legislation proclaimed, and nothing else is going to happen.

Stakeholders will come forward, as they have already done on many other occasions. Stakeholders are invited to come in to testify at public hearings. They will come forward, and they will make their recommendations in terms of amendments that should be incorporated into this legislation to make it better and to make it practical. They will take time out of their schedules to prepare, to come here, to make their presentation, and they will leave and they will have been ignored. They will have been ignored.

Speaker, if you ever took a look and did the analysis—in fact, I've been working with the library and asked them to do a summary for me, over the last 10 years, of the number of amendments that have been proposed by the opposition parties on legislation and how many of those amendments were actually incorporated into legislation. It's a work in progress, but I can tell you at this point that, on average, out of 1,000 amendments, there might be two that were actually incorporated into legislation.

Members of the government party who sit on standing committees will know that that's a fact because any observer of standing committees will know that the minute an amendment is read that is proposed by an opposition member of the Legislature, you can see the penguins lifting their hands voting no. They are told, "You cannot have a mind of your own." Even if a member of a standing committee on the part of the government believes that amendment is worthwhile, they're not allowed to vote in favour of that amendment. They'd be yanked from their committee appointment; they'd be hauled into the whip's office or the leader's office and disciplined. That's a reality. That's what happens here, and Speaker, you know that.

If there's anything we need in this place, it's to actually reinvigorate the process. The process is good. There's nothing wrong with the process: first and second reading, committee. If all of that was allowed to work without the heavy-handed interference of those who just want it their way, we would have a dynamic government. But we don't because the Premier's office, the whip's office and the minister's office just won't let it happen. It's too threatening to them, and there are consequences to that.

In any event, back to the minister's principles of infrastructure-related requirements. It says that "whether the construction of the infrastructure asset would reasonably be expected to,

- "(i) be a long-term return on investment"—we agree;
- "(ii) stimulate productivity and economic competitiveness"—we agree;
- "(iii) maximize tax assessment values and tax base growth"—we agree; and
- "(iv) support any other public policy goals of the government of Ontario or of any affected municipalities in Ontario"—I have some question about that.

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I'm going to give you one example here, where I'm concerned that this statement really has nothing to do

with the objective of this plan but has more to do with accommodating some special interests. There's a reference which on the surface is well meaning, and that is the requirement that infrastructure projects should engage apprentices. Who could possibly speak about that in principle?

Specifically, the legislation states as follows, under section 8—first of all, it defines "apprentice" as follows: It means, "an apprentice within the meaning of the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, and includes any person deemed under that act to be an apprentice for any purpose." So the definition of an apprentice relates to the meaning of that term under the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act. Then it goes on to say:

"Apprentices to be engaged

"(2) The government shall require that such numbers of apprentices as may be prescribed are employed or engaged for the purposes of the construction or of the maintenance by the government of infrastructure assets."

Here's why I have serious concerns, and I believe my colleagues in the official opposition have serious concerns about this as well, and I've heard from many stakeholders in the construction trades industry. They want to see this removed, and one of our amendments will deal with that. The concern is that, first of all, the whole debate around the College of Trades issue is one that is highly controversial. Most employers within the construction and trades industry are highly opposed to the bureaucracy that is being created by this government, and we can begin to see, already, the fault lines in that policy and in that bureaucracy forcing apprentices, forcing tradesmen into a bureaucratic organization that, in the end, doesn't benefit them, and it does not benefit the industry and certainly not the economy.

But the point of this clause in this bill—for the government to intervene, and to encroach by saying, "You must hire a certain number of apprentices into a particular project," is the beginning of ensuring that, rather than have efficiency in a project, we have a bureaucratic inefficiency. There are going to be contractors who will refuse to bid if, in fact, they will be handcuffed by this clause. This is an area that the government does not need to get involved in. It has nothing whatsoever to do with infrastructure projects and with ensuring that the long-term infrastructure needs of our province are met. And I am going to appeal to the minister to listen, if not to me, to stakeholders, very serious stakeholders, who I know have been making the same point with the minister. This is not something that is essential.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Zero representation.

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister is shaking his head and we'll have some discussion around that, and I'm sure that the minister will not want to ignore very important stakeholders who have a serious issue with this. As I indicate, we have a problem with that particular principle.

The fifth principle is, "provide a foundation for further infrastructure projects." I'm not sure if that means any-

thing, but I think we can support at least three out of the five principles here, and work with the government to ensure that we have a good framework brought forward.

Now, there's a reference here to consultation, under section 6(3). I'll read it:

"Consultation required before issuing criteria

"(3) Before issuing criteria under subsection (2), the minister shall consult, in the manner that the minister considers appropriate, with any persons or bodies that the minister considers appropriate given the content of the proposed criteria, including any potentially affected ministries, crown agencies or broader public sector entities."

So the minister is saying in legislation that he'll consult, but he'll only consult with people that, to him or whoever the subsequent minister is, are appropriate. Well, pray tell, who wouldn't be appropriate to consult with in the province of Ontario? If there are stakeholders, if there are people who want to provide input on these criteria, why would anyone be excluded? And yet, we know from experience that that has been the practice of this government. There are some people that they are pleased to listen to and welcome, and there are others who are excluded from that so-called "conversation" that the Premier likes to talk about. What we're saying—and what I'd like to say to the minister—is that if you are serious about wanting to get this legislation right, then you won't exclude people from that consultation, and they will be welcome. We know who you listen to, mostly, but I would ask you to expand the horizon somewhat. We'll be watching.

I referred earlier to a letter that was sent by the leader of the third party to the Premier. Tim Hudak, the leader of the official opposition, sent a letter to the Premier as well, and also sent a letter to the leader of the third party, as recently as February 9. On January 13, Tim Hudak announced the Million Jobs Act, which will be before this Legislature for debate. Tim Hudak spoke about the importance of the economy to the province of Ontario. If passed, the legislation that he is bringing forward will put people back to work and help young people achieve their goals of employment. He appealed based on what Statistics Canada showed: that Ontario had lost another 39,000 jobs in December. That's Ontario. That's 39,000 jobs lost in just one month under the watch of this government. The government payroll, interestingly, increased by 13,000 employees in the same time. What does that tell us? It tells us that the priorities of this government are wrong. They could not be more wrong and, if allowed to continue under this government, will continue to see Ontario last.

I think that it's appropriate to let people know as they listen to this debate that there is hope, that there are alternatives, that it does not have to be this way. Under Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus, there are very crystal-clear policies that have been put forward, that are in contrast to the current government. Those policies show a path to ensuring the creation of a million new jobs. They will ensure energy affordability and reliability. There's a commitment to training more

skilled workers to meet the demands in our trades and to help young people find essential jobs. Speaker, there are far too many young people who in past decades would have already been in the workforce earning a living, taking pride in the work that they are doing, and under the Wynne government, those young people are living in basements with their parents. They are wondering what their future holds. They can't make the car payments; they can't make the car insurance payments. Everything is out of their reach. That's the Ontario that the Wynne-McGuinty Liberals have created.

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I want the people in this province to know that there is an alternative and there is hope, and it is not under this current government and it will not be under a new experiment with the New Democrats in this province. We've had that experience under Bob Rae. Unfortunately, there are far too many young people who don't even remember those days, but I ask them to check with their parents, because they'll remember well what those days were like.

What we need is a return to and a refocus on economic responsibility, on accountability, on transparency in government, a government that actually respects the tax dollars that are sent to Queen's Park every year, a government that will put young people first, a government that will put seniors first.

I have a meeting, Speaker, later this week in a retirement home in Newmarket with seniors who have been told that their essential long-term-care and home care services are going to be removed from them. They will no longer have the confidence and sense of dignity that they have now because they've been able to rely on in-house service. How can anyone take pride in supporting that kind of policy?

I suggest that it is time for a change. We talk in this bill about hard public infrastructure assets. The government has failed miserably on that count and we have before us a piece of legislation that is a framework only, that minister after minister has promised to address and they haven't, and we have no reason to believe that this leopard will change its spots. We have no reason to believe that the same people are going to start doing something differently, even in the face of an impending election. They can't—it's not who they are—but that's the hard infrastructure assets we're talking about.

What is even more important is the devastation that this government has brought to our social services and to the people of our province and the young people of our province and the seniors of our province and the disabled in our province who are also being neglected.

What it's going to take is an absolute change of government, a change of attitude, and it's going to take a group of people who know how important it is that if you're going to look after the social service needs of our province, you must have a strong economy to do that. You cannot continue to borrow our way into debt. That's precisely what's been happening. The only group of people in this Legislature who are offering that kind of

solution is the Progressive Conservative caucus under Tim Hudak, because it's this caucus that has put forward documentation of policies that will fix the economy, that will restore confidence in our economy, that will attract investment into the economy, that will encourage business owners to reinvest in their business so that they can create the jobs that young people in our province so desperately need. That's only going to come through strong fiscal policy, that's only going to come if we rip out the red tape that is stifling business in this province, and it's only going to come if you can actually demonstrate that you have a vision and a plan to go with that vision. Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus have that plan, and I look forward to the next election because that's the only way that there will be hope for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to take a couple of minutes just to tap on one aspect of this bill. The minister says it will make infrastructure projects in the province more transparent in the future. That will be a good thing because we've learned from the Herb Gray Parkway, for example, some of the mistakes in the past. I know local suppliers in my area aren't being paid for the work that they've done on the Herb Gray Parkway. Hotham Building Materials is owed more than \$100,000; Jake's Crane, almost \$100,000 owing; Waltron Trailers in Ridgetown, \$50,000; R.J. Cyr, nearly \$15,000. These are suppliers who have provided goods and services in good faith to a government of Ontario infrastructure project, and they haven't been paid. Some of them have had to resort very recently to expensive legal action to try to get the government to make the suppliers—who they're still continuing to give money to—pay their bills.

As this bill goes forward, we need assurances from the government that they will put in place stipulations that if government money is coming into a project, the people receiving that money will pay their bills, will pay their local suppliers and will not hang them out to dry and not force them to take expensive legal action to try to recover what is rightfully theirs. It's all a matter of principle, Speaker, that in Ontario, when small business people are doing business with this government, they will be fairly treated and fairly compensated. I'd like to see that somehow put into the bill as this bill goes forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate my friend from Newmarket–Aurora's comments. I want to assure the member from Newmarket–Aurora that we will be listening to him very carefully. He and I continue to meet constructively to put ideas together as we move to actually ensuring there's no light between the plan and the vision the province has in the budget. Integrating it into a 10-year budget, I think, is a huge step forward.

I just want to comment briefly on what the challenge is. Around the world, Madam Speaker, it is generally the standard that 5% of your gross domestic product should

be spent on infrastructure. That has been the goal when I was at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I don't think there's anyone who doesn't agree with that. This is not a partisan shot at the official opposition, but from 1973 to 2003, we were spending, in Ontario, somewhere between \$2 billion and \$3 billion in infrastructure, or 0.25%. Today, we're spending \$13 or \$14 billion, which is about 2% of GDP. The formula has been traditionally that the province spends 2% of GDP and municipalities 1%, which they're doing. The federal government now is down to 0.25% or less 0.5% of GDP. So the infrastructure strategy and budget we have and the plan will sustain in the long term that commitment to 2%. The challenge is that the federal government, which takes 60% of the taxes collected in Canada, is only at 0.25% to 0.5%, depending on the province—less than 0.5% in Ontario. This doesn't work. We will see loss of competitiveness unless our national government does that.

Al Duerr, who at the time was the mayor of Calgary, and I when I was the mayor of Winnipeg negotiated that deal for a five-cent-a-litre gas tax. There is almost net no new money above that, and that's a municipal transfer. That's our challenge.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully and attentively to the member from Newmarket–Aurora on his comments on Bill 141. I believe that he linked it very well to the need for the leader—whether it's Dalton McGuinty, Kathleen Wynne or, for that matter, Tim Hudak—to have a vision and a plan. We've heard over the last several months of the lack of a vision or a plan, jumping around and throwing money out at by-elections that really aren't linked to an overarching plan.

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That's the most troubling part of it: Whether it's a gas plant during an election that's being decided, spending billions of dollars to basically buy an election—that's the point that Mr. Klees was making. The lack of a vision and a plan has been troubling for the last 10 years of jerking around, spending money like drunken sailors and spending money in excess of the growth in the economy. That's exactly why we're in the trouble that we're in.

I think Mr. Klees, in his remarks, quite succinctly outlined the perilous position that Ontario is in today. The third-largest expenditure in Ontario—Madam Speaker, you know this as well. The province of Ontario is in a bit of a tailspin. We spend more on servicing the debt—that's the interest on our accumulated debt—than we do on many other expectations of service in the province of Ontario. It's affecting most seniors and people in Ontario. The unemployed, the most vulnerable in Ontario are being affected by the performance of this government.

All the good things—when Premier Wynne speaks, she's a great communicator, but I don't believe a word she says. That's the problem. We heard that during the by-elections: throwing money at hospitals, racetracks—you name it. What's missing in Ontario today is a vision and a plan. Where are the jobs? The only thing I've

heard, even from the Minister of Infrastructure over there—Mr. Murray said that he wants to increase taxes by 10 cents per litre of gas. That's their plan. I don't think—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure, actually, to comment on some of the reflections that the member from Newmarket—Aurora has provided today on this important piece of legislation. If we get infrastructure right, then there are thousands of jobs to be created, so I think that we share that vision that the member has communicated.

We also welcome the provision of increased use of apprenticeships, but other than that, we really don't see a response to what the construction industry is actually telling us is a badly flawed model for building infrastructure. We will not address the infrastructure deficit if we keep doing things the same way that we always have. For example, at a time when foreign global companies are increasingly winning huge construction contracts, there are no requirements spelled out for increased Ontario content. This should be a shared goal of ours: to create jobs in Ontario.

I will also note that the member from Newmarket says that he's looking forward to the next election, because, of course, he's not going to be in the next election. He has provided 18 and a half years to this House, and I personally want to say thank you for that. But his frustration on the infrastructure file—which, he rightly points out, the Liberals have had over 10 years to address—is a shared frustration that we have. We, of course, on this side of the House, have tried to address and come to the table with some solutions, like participating in the budget process and bringing forward ideas throughout that well-documented process of budget 2012 and budget 2013.

These are the facts: We have a \$100-billion deficit on the infrastructure file, and 60% of the infrastructure that needs to be replaced in this province is over 50 years old. This should be an issue that we all refocus our attention on. The piece of legislation that's before us, when it gets to second reading—we are going to be making sure that whatever implementation strategy is on the table actually works and brings resolution on the infrastructure file.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Newmarket—Aurora has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, the Minister of Transportation, the member for Durham and the member for Kitchener—Waterloo for their comments.

I will simply say this—oh, before I do, I do want to acknowledge that that letter that I referred to from the leader of the third party was in fact delivered to me, reformatted, halfway through my speech, so it does exist.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning on this bill. There is no question that infrastructure should be and must be a priority of the Ontario government. I have serious concerns about the ability of the current government, notwithstanding this piece of legislation, to actually take it to the next step and to

implement the policies that are necessary to ensure that the infrastructure deficit in our province is finally addressed.

There is also no question in my mind that there is only one government that will have the ability to put in place the economic policies as well as to implement their vision for a better Ontario, and that is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. I encourage people in the province of Ontario to take note of what their options are. In my opinion, there is really only one option, and that is Tim Hudak as Premier and the Progressive Conservative caucus as their government. That is what will give us a better Ontario. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I'm told that I'm to take a lead on this as well. I don't know that I will ever stretch it out to the full hour, but it is my pleasure to stand and speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, on this issue, Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

I was in the House late last year when the minister first spoke to this and gave us his view of the bill. He started out by talking about former Premier Bill Davis and Mr. Davis's vision for Ontario's future that he laid out back in the mid-1960s. I'm not sure that my friend the minister has the same crystal ball that Mr. Davis used back when he was in office, but the minister was boldly predicting that we're going to see the creation of 800,000 new jobs in Ontario by the year 2016. That certainly caught my attention: 800,000 new jobs in a couple of years. I'm just curious about those new jobs—when the minister's staff put together the numbers for him on that, whether they had revised the count after recent events, such as the uncertainty now around the Ring of Fire. Without a dedicated source of power in northwestern Ontario—we all know there are 12 or 13 mines that could open up if they had dedicated power. But without the hydro, the roads, the rail, the transmission lines may never happen and therefore the jobs would never happen, without the commitment to hydro. That was the first link in the jobs chain, Speaker. So some uncertainty lingers around that.

The minister also spoke of having a plan, having a policy and having a budget. He said the plan would be actionable, he said the plan would be measurable and he said the plan would be transparent. Perhaps, Speaker, if the minister were to share with us his crystal ball, we'd just how transparent those job numbers really are. We would like to see where those 800,000 new jobs would be created and what percentage of those jobs would be the type that pay good money. We all know that some jobs these days are temporary, they're precarious and they come with no health benefits. And how many of these jobs would be doled out by the growing number of temporary job agencies?

Speaker, the minister painted a rosy picture of 800,000 new jobs and, if I'm correct, he tied some of them into this infrastructure bill, Bill 141. Of course, what he failed

to mention in calculating those job numbers was that at the same time, in the same place, in the same province, hydro rates are going up, month after month after month. Many people feel that jobs will be lost when companies leave for more affordable locations elsewhere. They can't afford to pay the hydro here. They're moving to other jurisdictions where hydro rates are lower, taking the jobs with them, not expanding their businesses and not creating new jobs. So I believe it's a fair question to put to the minister—whether these job losses were a part of his calculation—because if we don't have the same number of companies, they won't be expanding their employment force and they won't be hiring some of the people the minister may have been counting on to get to that 800,000 number.

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I see, Speaker, a major difference in a well-paying job held by someone working on a government-financed infrastructure project and a not-so-well-paying-job held by someone serving fast food somewhat near a location of an infrastructure project. Don't get me wrong: I respect everyone who creates a job, holds a job, is looking for a job, or would love to get back into the workforce but for reasons of disability or other health issues can't do it at this time. But when I hear the number of 800,000 new jobs, I think that perhaps, unintentionally, a rosy picture of a brighter future is created in the minds of some. So, minister, from your lips to God's ear; I hope we see a lot of new jobs created. But at the same time, let us do what we can to hold onto the jobs we already have.

Now, I know you can't be working on infrastructure projects unless you're working with the banks. You need the money to pay for these. And when we talk about 800,000 new jobs, I'm not sure how many would be coming from the banking sector. I guess not too many, because we heard last year—in fact, Speaker, it was on the very same day that the minister rose in the House to speak to this bill that we heard of the record-breaking profits taken in by the RBC. Banks, as we all know, have been laying off people, cutting jobs, outsourcing jobs, and now we can see the wheelbarrows—wheelbarrows that should be on construction sites, but instead wheelbarrows full of money, money taken to load boxcars, boxcars full of money going into the pockets of the shareholders of the banks instead of being used to create new jobs. Record profits, and not the creation of a single new job. For every IT job in a bank in Canada, there are four, and sometimes five, people in IT in India and elsewhere working on the same projects. So to the bankers, Speaker, I say, bring those jobs back to Canada. Share those profits with your employees and your customers, and regain some trust and some respect.

The minister spoke during his kick-off to this bill, Bill 141, about the Herb Gray Parkway and the P3 partnership, which, again, has caused many of us to question why the government seems determined to stick with the P3 models instead of returning to the more traditional methods of tendering out construction work in Ontario. We learned with this P3 project in Windsor and Essex

county, and we learned the hard way, that there are flaws that need serious consideration. You'll recall, Speaker, the huge safety concern that developed there when a company, a consortium from France and Spain, had the financial ability to bid on the project even without being certified by the CSA to do the work they were hired to do. Girders were built month after month by unqualified, uncertified, unsupervised workers. Yet, at the end of the day, when that shoddy work was exposed, the minister had to step in, put a stop to the work and order an investigation by a panel of experts, which initially gave the opinion that perhaps the shoddy work could be rehabilitated. But after a further forensic examination of the work—meaning the girders were cut open, Speaker, end to end—an examination of the metal rods and cages holding the girders together, they were found to be a jumble, a rat's nest, a twisted mess. No rehabilitation, band-aid solution, could be found to put those humpty dumpty girders back together again. That—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has come to recess. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Today I'd like to introduce my son, Ryan Jeffrey, who is in the gallery visiting to watch question period today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure this morning to welcome four people from Huron county who provide valuable services. We have Pauline Douglas from Queensway long-term care in Hensall and Erika King, Seaforth Manor. They've done an outstanding job caring for their folks during the winter storms. They are joined today by Christine Ozimek and Richard Sullivan of PCLT. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Good morning. Today I would like to welcome Rita Soronen, Susan Towle and Bruce McKenna, who are here from the Dave Thomas Foundation. Thank you for being here, and welcome.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce some guests from Don Valley West in the gallery: Janet MacDougall, Anne Marie Branch, Margaret Casey and Sara Hill.

I'd also like to introduce the Honourable Alvin Curling, who is actually here with 11 of his Seneca College public administration students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're stepping on my toes.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And I know that the Speaker will want to elaborate on the roles that Dr. Curling has played.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You mean you stepped on my toes?

The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to introduce Roxanne Villeneuve Robertson in the gallery today. She is joined by Moe Menard, who is up from the riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Speaker, while I do have the floor and my mike is still on, many of the MPPs here are aware that one of our journalists in our family here at Queen's Park is quite ill, so I want to send on behalf of everybody our best wishes to Jonathan Jenkins.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome the Canadian Black Caucus to Queen's Park here today, who will be joining many members of this House celebrating Black History Month. Welcome.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning. I would like to welcome the mother of page Jaclyn Hurley, Mary Beth Hurley, and her aunt, Julie May Doherty, to the Legislature today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted that Harrison Clark, a volunteer in my office in London, is joining us today. Welcome, Harrison Clark.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome—even though he was obscured by one of those ornate poles, I have located him—Patrick Kelly, who has joined my staff here at Queen's Park. I'm looking forward to a long and productive relationship with Patrick here at Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome not only Thomas Clifford, who is a page here from St. Paul's—he's today's page captain—but his mother, who is joining us in the gallery: Catherine Pepevnak.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm delighted to welcome here in the Legislature a fine resident of the riding of York—South Weston, Asquith Allen.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome page Michael Sadono from Newmarket. I want to recognize his father, Andre; his mother, Yola; and his sister, Mary.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, Happy New Year to you. I just want to remind all members that this is Kindness Week in Ontario. After question period, the member from Dufferin—Caledon, the member from Nickel Belt and I will be serving Kindness Week Tim Hortons cookies to encourage kindness to everyone. Happy Kindness Week.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce today the mother of Sarah Forbes, a new page from Mississauga South. Her mother is Robin Forbes. She's attending Queen's Park to see her daughter's first day in the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, as you may recall, I had the very unique and proud experience in the last session of Parliament to have my daughter serving here as a page in the Legislature. Payton was here four weeks. It is a very unique experience and memorable for the entire family. I'm so pleased that Abbey Jackson, who is the daughter of MPP Rod Jackson from Barrie, is going to be spending the next three weeks here as a page in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Even though the Premier stepped on my toes, I'll carry on with the intro-

duction. In the Speaker's gallery, we have a delegation from the college, as pointed out by the Premier, but we also have with us a distinguished member from this place, from Scarborough North in the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th; Scarborough—Rouge River in the 37th and 38th; and Speaker in the 38th Parliament, Alvin Curling. Dr. Curling, welcome.

RAINBOW FLAG

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that, as a one-time exception to the prescribed use of the precinct's courtesy flagpole, the rainbow flag be flown at the Ontario Legislature for the duration of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, subject to being temporarily interrupted for any other flag-raising that would normally occur during this period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent that, as a one-time exception to the prescribed use of the precinct's courtesy flagpole, the rainbow flag be flown at the Ontario Legislature for the duration of the 2014 Olympic Games, subject to being temporarily interrupted for any other flag-raising that would normally occur during this period. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in review of your first year in office, I noticed that Ontario didn't create a single new job, that we lost as many jobs in the province as we gained. Unfortunately, Dalton McGuinty's approach and Premier Wynne's approach continues to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —on the wrong track. We're losing jobs—39,000 jobs in December alone—and people are losing hope in the province.

So my question to you is: Given that Ontario did not add a single new job in all of 2013, why do you want to do more of the same? Isn't it time to try a new and different track to put people back to work and Ontario back in business?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me welcome everyone back. I want to just say to the MPPs-elect, Wayne Gates and Gila Martow, congratulations to them, and we look forward to welcoming them in the Legislature.

Let me just say to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, through you, that in fact, he's got his information wrong. There have been 93,000 net new jobs created in this province just in the last year. Last month there

were 23,000 new jobs—6,000 net new jobs. So in fact, the plan that we have in place is working, and that plan is based on investing in infrastructure. It's based on making sure the people have the skills they need and investing in people so that they can get the training and the skills that they need, and it's based on working in partnership with business. I hope the Leader of the Opposition can work with us on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There is the old expression, Premier, that facts are stubborn things. Throughout all of 2013, Ontario did not add a single net new job in the province. We lost as many jobs as we gained, and that's a record of failure.

I know you try to brush it off on the McGuinty administration like you had once met Dalton McGuinty at a fundraiser or something, even though you were one of the key ministers. You've continued on the same path, and that means that we have almost a million people in our province who are out of work. I think we can do a lot better than that.

1040

The second thing that concerns me is that not only, under your premiership, have we not added new jobs in 2013, we now are the only province in Canada that saw welfare rates increase, the number of people stuck on dependency. Ontario is unique, sadly, in this fact, that our proportion has actually increased. To me, that seems to be a record of failure.

I think we can restore hope to Ontario and put people back to work, but we can't do it the same way. So why are you stuck on the McGuinty agenda? Isn't it time to try something new to get Ontario back—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that we're at the beginning of a new session and that the Leader of the Opposition is going to go on the attack; I get that, Mr. Speaker. But I think it's really important that the Leader of the Opposition be accurate when he goes on that attack. There have been 95,000 net new jobs created in this province just in the last year, so he's just plain wrong when he puts out that there are no new jobs. It's just not true.

I look forward to debating with him the issues, but I want to debate with him on a factual basis—so 95,000 net new jobs, and if the Leader of the Opposition is asking whether we will join him on a spiral downward, to lose good-paying jobs in this province and undermine labour in his so-called right to work, we are not going there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, come to order.

Final supplementary, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, that's my entire point. The PC caucus is not going to join you on this whirlwind downwards of job losses in the province of Ontario. It's an entire whirlpool.

I guess you are trying to put your first year in office into the past, but you say there are more jobs. Tell that to the folks who lost their job at Kellogg's; tell that to the folks who lost their jobs at Heinz; tell that to the folks who lost their jobs at Novartis.

I've got a plan to restore hope to Ontario, with more paycheques and better take-home pay. I've got a plan to put young people back to work in the province of Ontario, not in Saskatchewan or Alberta. I call it my million jobs plan, a million new jobs over the next eight years. The plan will lower taxes and create jobs, make energy more affordable; less provincial debt and an emphasis on skilled trades.

I've got a plan to create a million jobs in this province; you've got a plan for a whirlpool of job losses. We reject your plan. We see a better future for Ontarians. Won't you join us and support our million jobs plan today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 2013, employment rose by 95,700 jobs. Since June 2009, 440,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. So those are the facts. If the Leader of the Opposition is not interested in those facts, that's his prerogative, but we know that making those investments in people and partnering with business and making sure that we create the environment for business to come to the province—that that's working.

The drive to the bottom is being led by the Leader of the Opposition. His plan is to cut and slash, to undermine labour, to drive good-wage jobs out of the province. The so-called right-to-work thrust is his. We are not going to go there. We are not going to join him in that downward spiral. We are going to continue to work with business, create partnerships and create jobs.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, Speaker: It's unfortunate that the Premier's only plan seems to be the minimum wage act. Our plan is a million-jobs plan for good, middle-class jobs, where people can build a career.

I want to see people have jobs they can build a career around, they can buy a house, they can raise a family—not a job that we're stuck with.

Premier, I'll remind you of your record. You told the people of Ontario that your Green Energy Act would create 50,000 jobs; in fact, we found out that it has cost us jobs. Premier, you told us that your big stimulus package in 2008 would create 400,000 jobs; in fact, we

lost jobs in 2013. You told us that your HST tax hike would create 600,000 jobs. That's over a million jobs. Unfortunately, it probably cost us jobs, because there's a million people in Ontario who have no job to go to today.

Premier, why do you persist in a minimum-wage jobs plan? Why don't you engage in our plan to create good, middle-class jobs—a million of them—over the next eight years?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The right-to-work initiative that the Leader of the Opposition would like to initiate—would like to see everyone working at minimum wage or lower. That's where he would like to go.

So, 440,000 net new jobs in this province since June 2009—and there are many, many people who look at Ontario and know that things are going well. Things are looking much better in Ontario than they were, and the Ontario economy is starting to grow again. Who said that, Mr. Speaker? Jim Flaherty, January 5, 2014.

The fact is that we have worked with industry. We have created opportunity, and 440,000 net new jobs have been created in this province. What the Leader of the Opposition would like to do is cut services, slash programs and drive good jobs out of this province. We're not going there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, if I wanted people to work at minimum wage jobs, I'd prop you up just like the NDP is doing, because you're leading when it comes to minimum wage jobs.

I'm not going to argue with you, Premier. If you want a Premier focused on minimum wage jobs, you've got one right now. If you want one focused on creating middle-class jobs with better take-home pay, that's me, that's my team and that's my plan.

Premier, you just can't argue with the facts. You failed to create any new jobs in 2013. You've turned Ontario now into the welfare capital of Canada. I think we can do a lot better than that. I see an Ontario that rises again. I see an Ontario that guarantees the next generation that they can make their way in the province of Ontario with good careers and good jobs. I've got a plan to do so: the million jobs plan. I've asked to meet with you to discuss it. But, Premier, when we're hemorrhaging jobs in the province, why don't you take another—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition has a slogan, and I understand it's a catchy slogan, but there's no detail about how those jobs would actually be created. In fact, Grant LaFleche of the Welland Tribune says it well: Hudak's "magical wish thinking is just insulting to our collective intelligence."

The fact is, there's no substance to what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about. In fact, the specifics that are in the Leader of the Opposition's plan are specifics that would drive us down, that would undermine the gains that organized labour has made for generations, that would drive good jobs out of the province, and we are not going to go there.

We are going to continue to make the investments that are necessary. Right now, business needs a government to partner with them and make sure they have the supports that are necessary so they can compete in the global economy. That's the path that we're going to take.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Premier, I think we will agree on this: You're basically one of Dalton McGuinty's top lieutenants. You supported his policies that got us into a huge mess, that doubled our debt and lost us 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Now, for the year you've been in office, you've actually made matters worse. We've seen manufacturing job losses accelerate in our great province.

I don't understand, if you are trying to stick to a plan that's costing us jobs, why you keep putting your head against the wall. Why don't we turn around and try a brand new plan for the province? If you want details, here are the details. Stop the unaffordable subsidies to wind and solar, to make hydro affordable. Lower taxes in our province. Say we can do more in the skilled trades, to actually look at more trade opportunities by joining the New West Partnership.

Premier, my bill is full of plans and details. It will be debated at 3 o'clock. Why don't you join me, pass and accelerate it? Let's get people back to work and restore hope in our great province. That's what it's all about.

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I think we're going to stay on the plan that actually is creating jobs, Mr. Speaker. We've made enormous recovery since June 2009, and employment has risen by more than 95,000 jobs just in this last year.

Obviously, the track that we're on that is leading to that job creation and is bringing business to the province—there's no doubt that we're in a transition. I've said that many times over the past few weeks. We are in a transition. Many manufacturing companies are needing to invest in order to be able to compete globally, and that's why we're partnering with them.

One of the things that has surprised me about the Leader of the Opposition is that he has not expressed a willingness or an interest in partnering with businesses, in understanding that that kind of investment, when we're competing with jurisdictions all around the world—that we have to put that kind of support and resource on the table.

We're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, and I am absolutely positive that the recovery that we're seeing will continue.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Before I begin, on behalf of New Democrats, I want to welcome and acknowledge Wayne Gates, the MPP-elect for the riding of Niagara Falls. I look forward to him taking his spot with our caucus.

Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Does the Premier agree that middle-class families who make Ontario work are feeling financially stretched in tough times?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I absolutely do agree that we have to be very cognizant of the burdens that middle-class people are feeling. The fact is that they are concerned about many things. One of the things that they're concerned about is retirement security, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that they're concerned about is that in their communities, people who are living on minimum wage haven't had certainty about where that minimum wage is going to go. Another thing that they're concerned about is that their children will have jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely concerned about the middle class. The plan that we've put in place and the six pillars of that plan are targeted directly at making sure that middle-class people retain their jobs and more people can find a middle-class job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For months, the Premier has made it clear that she plans to move ahead with new, unfair taxes, tolls and fees that will hit household budgets. Can the Premier tell families today how much more she'll be asking them to pay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, underlying the question from the leader of the third party is an assumption that people don't want more transit, that people don't want investment in retirement security, that people don't want to make sure that there is a business climate that is going to allow them to find a job.

Mr. Speaker, I have said, and I have said repeatedly, I am concerned about the burden that people in this province are carrying. I understand that that's something we have to take very seriously. When we bring in our budget, we will be paying very, very close attention to that. But that does not mean that the people of this province do not need investment in infrastructure and do not need investment and a structure within which to save for their retirement. I hope that the leader of the third party will support us on those initiatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think the Premier missed the premise of the question, which is what people

can or cannot afford right now while they're being squeezed right out of the middle class. On election night, in fact, I heard the Premier dismiss the message that voters sent. She said that she could ignore the voters and ignore the message they sent because, frankly, she's the Premier.

One thing I heard loud and clear knocking on doors in Niagara Falls and at kitchen tables and doughnut shops all over Ontario through the winter was that families who make Ontario work feel like they are being squeezed right out of the middle class, and they cannot be asked to pay more yet again. Is the Premier going to listen, or will she continue to ignore them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, let me just say first of all that I've been in the same doughnut shops and those same kitchens. I do not ignore the commentary from those people, because they are us. There is no separation between us and them, Mr. Speaker. We are in this together, and if we do not make decisions for the long term in this Legislature, if we do not make the investments that are necessary so that there will be jobs, so that there will be infrastructure in this province, then there will be no future for Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

New question: leader of the third party.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. I sent a letter to the Premier yesterday and I made it clear that I will not support a budget that has new taxes or tolls for middle-class families. New Democrats are going to actually respect the people whose paycheques and jobs make Ontario work and focus on making their lives affordable, not squeezing them out of the middle class.

Can the Premier tell hard-working Ontario families how much more the Liberal government is going to make them pay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I got the letter from the leader of the third party, and I appreciate it and I certainly will be responding. I will be reaching out to both leaders and I would like to meet with them as we develop the budget.

But what was not in that letter was a single thing that the leader of the third party believes in. I have no idea if the leader of the third party supports indexing of minimum wage to inflation. I have no idea whether the leader of the third party understands that those same people she's talking about are worried about retirement security for themselves and for their children. I have no idea if the leader of the third party understands and is interested in the fact that people are worried about how they are going to get to work and how they're going to get their kids home because of congestion. So I look forward to meet-

ing with the leader of the third party and I really look forward to hearing from her what she believes in.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment. That was a delayed reaction.

Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier likes to talk about fairness, but families have been hit with the HST, climbing hydro bills and the highest auto insurance rates in Canada, while the money they send to Queen's Park is allocated to gas plant cancellations, rising CEO salaries and bloated severance packages. I think it's time to show the middle-class families who make Ontario work a little bit of respect.

I ask again: How much more is the Premier going to ask them to pay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the leader of the third party has got a list of some very populist ideas and she raised them last year when we talked about the budget. We found common ground, and so, on auto insurance, for example, auto insurance rates dropped by 3.98% in the fourth quarter; we've seen a reduction of 4.66%, on average, since August. We're on track to meet our goal of an average 8% reduction by August 2014. That's happening; we are doing those things. We had identified auto insurance as an area that we needed to work on, so we're working on those things.

The leader of the third party does not have the corner on compassion for people who are burdened; she does not have that. We are working to help people in their day-to-day lives and we will continue to do that.

We also have a vision for how we should move ahead in this province. We also believe in something. We believe that investing in people and partnering with business and investing in infrastructure and transit and making sure that people have those resources—that those things are important.

What does she believe in, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats are not going to support new taxes, tolls and fees that hit household budgets. We don't think that hitting families with yet another sales tax hike is going to actually grow our economy, and we don't agree with the Hudak Conservatives' plan for new, private, 407-style toll highways. The families that make Ontario work are being squeezed like never before, and our economy will not succeed if they're falling further and further behind.

1100

Is the Premier ready to respect the people who sent us here, who voted in by-elections last week and who are tired of being asked to pay more while others get all the breaks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, I am very aware that people are feeling that, as the economy

recovers, there are burdens on them, and they are concerned about the future of the province, which is exactly why I think it's very important that at this moment in our history we have a plan that works with people in the province, that works with businesses in the province, that makes the investments that are necessary in order for us to have that aspirational future that I believe we all want.

We're going to bring forward a budget that is fair, that is reasonable, paying very close attention to the people who are experiencing those concerns. But at the same time, we are taking actions to help people. I would love to know why the leader of the third party will not commit to support our indexation of minimum wage to inflation. That's an initiative that I would have thought the third party would have been very interested in.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Let me share with you, Premier, what our caucus learned by visiting over 30 cities over the last couple of months, from Sarnia to Kenora, from Webequie to Oakville, from Timmins to Rockland, and dozens of communities in between: Skyrocketing hydro rates, high taxes and crippling red tape were the top three issues.

Our three biggest problems were created by this government, and they have absolutely no plan to change direction on any of those three issues. As a result, Ontario had 86 consecutive months with higher-than-the-national-average unemployment.

Next Thursday, our leader, Tim Hudak, is bringing his million jobs act to the floor of this Legislature. Premier, will you support his plan to bring people back to work in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. Let's get some facts straight. Ontario has had over 450,000 net—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought maybe one might be able to control themselves.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario has been increasing jobs over the last number of years, to the tune of 440,000 net new jobs, including the 300,000 that were lost during a recession that affected the global market. We've taken initiatives. The members opposite are trying to recycle old plans that are going to bring us down in a downward spiral. They're looking at the initiatives that we've taken and they're trying to replicate some of what we've done, but they do it in a poor way. You've been to the table way too late now, because we're on a track to do even more.

We have in our plan another 100,000 more net new jobs coming forward because of the initiatives that we

put in our budget. The member opposite should be supporting that and should be standing up for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: Kellogg's, Heinz, Caterpillar—they've all left Ontario. Now, they're still making cereal, they're still making ketchup, they're still making earth-moving equipment; they're just not making them in Ontario any longer. In fact, one million people woke up this morning in Ontario without a job. That's your facts, Minister.

You've given us the highest energy rates in North America; the highest payroll taxes in Canada. We're about to have the highest business taxes amongst the large provinces in Canada, and it's this government that shut down the Red Tape Commission. Skyrocketing hydro, high taxes, crippling red tape: That's the legacy of the Liberal-NDP coalition.

Will you be supporting Tim Hudak's plan to put people back to work in the discussion next Thursday?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I still don't understand why the official opposition doesn't get the statistics from Statistics Canada that showed 95,000 net new jobs created last year. In fact, what the opposition is intent on is—every job that's created in this province, they seem to be against. So 3,700 high-paying IT jobs that Cisco was bringing to this country—not some other country or jurisdiction around the world, in December—that party was against.

Again, we've got evidence of job creation across this province. In London, there was an announcement just last week by General Dynamics of the largest export contract in the history of this country; that took place in London, Ontario. They're going to be exporting—they have a contract for the next 14 years, which is going to guarantee good jobs for those 3,000 persons in London, Ontario.

The Eastern Ontario Development Fund and the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund together have created and retained more than 22,000 jobs. The party opposite voted against that important measure. I don't understand what their jobs plan is, because to me it seems like it's job destruction.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier. For families across Ontario, it seems like the Liberal government just doesn't seem interested in the change that Ontario needs. The government is bringing down costs for auto insurance companies, but drivers tell us their bills are still climbing. The government promised to have the Financial Accountability Office up and running by the end of 2013 to protect taxpayers, but Christmas came and went, and no one has been hired.

The Premier claims she's offering change. Why does it look like more of the same?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm a little disappointed in the member. The Financial Accountability Officer is an officer of this House. There is a panel that is in place which is, in my understanding, interviewing individuals to take over that position. A member of her own party is on it. To stand up here and try to be mischievous, to say that somehow we're dragging our feet on a process which involves the entire Legislature, is, quite frankly, beneath her, and I'm very, very surprised that she would raise this question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Premier, families hear promises from this government, but Liberals seem unwilling or unable to deliver results. Despite promises to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%, families still have not seen relief. The government seems more interested in playing the numbers than in reducing the rates. While families are being told they have to make sacrifices, they see yet another public sector CEO collecting more money in a severance package than they will make in a decade, and the government insists, with a straight face, that a hard cap at twice the Premier's salary is absolutely impossible. The Financial Accountability Office, which was supposed to be up and running last year, remains vacant.

Does the Premier think that that is real change?

Hon. John Milloy: This is, as I say, beneath the honourable member. She knows exactly the process that is in place. We have a representative from each party. This is an officer of the Legislature—not an officer of the government; an officer of the Legislature. It's in the hands of a committee of the Legislature on which her party has a representative.

My understanding is that they are in the process of reviewing candidates. They will be conducting interviews, and they will come forward with a recommendation which will be considered by this Legislature. That was what was envisioned in the legislation which was presented to this House, which her party supported.

Again, as I say, I think it's beneath her to try to sow mischief as she is doing today. We look forward to a Financial Accountability Officer, as prescribed in the legislation which was brought forward to this Legislature and supported by her and her party.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Our government wanted to ensure that, going forward, the minimum wage would be set in a way that is both fair for workers and predictable for businesses. That's why we established the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. This panel was comprised of representatives from business, labour, poverty advocates and youth. The panel travelled the province, speaking to and hearing from businesses—both large and small—community groups and everyday Ontarians. They then developed a consen-

sus report based on the feedback that was received from the outreach with Ontarians, and recently the chair of the panel provided his report with recommendations to the government.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you speak about what the panel recommended on this very important issue to all Ontarians?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for a very important question. Speaker, as you may recall, last June, the government created an independent advisory panel to look into the issue of minimum wage. The panel was led by an independent chair, and he was also accompanied by members from the business community, from retail and tourism, labour, anti-poverty groups and youth representatives.

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They have provided to the government a consensus report with four recommendations, the recommendations being:

—that the minimum wage be linked to the consumer price index;

—that it be revised annually, with four months' notice;

—that there be a full review of the minimum wage every five years; and

—that an ongoing research program be established.

I'm very proud to say that the Premier announced that the government will be raising the minimum wage to \$11 an hour as of June 1, and also, we will be bringing legislation forward that will index any future increases to the Ontario consumer price index.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for his response. I'm glad that we are giving hard-working Ontarians an increase in the minimum wage now. It's only fair.

I'm happy to see legislation coming forward to remove the ad hoc nature of previous increases. This legislation will provide predictability for business, especially our small businesses, allowing them to plan for increases so that they may remain competitive and create jobs.

Now, I know that there are still some constituents in my community of Ottawa–Orléans who would like the government to increase the minimum wage by 40% to \$14 an hour, and others have said that there should be no increase whatsoever. But it's important that we take care to ensure that people's wages and businesses stay competitive.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you speak to what we are doing to ensure that the changes we make are fair for workers and businesses alike?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We are setting a fair minimum wage in Ontario: fair for Ontarians who work on minimum wage, and predictable for businesses that create jobs in our economy. We're using an objective and balanced way of determining the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, and also tying any future increases, on an annual basis, to the cost of living. Therefore, what we are suggesting is that we take politics out of how minimum wage is determined.

Now, it is regrettable that the official opposition does not support any increases to minimum wage. They did not raise the minimum wage in the eight years that they were in government and, of course, they don't support any minimum wage. But what has been surprising is how the NDP, the third party, has no position on minimum wage. That is extremely shocking and surprising, because people want to know: Where does the NDP stand on increasing minimum wage? Do they support indexing minimum wage to the cost of living? It's shocking that this party has no position whatsoever.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Energy. I find myself asking where to start. They blew \$1 billion on cancelled gas plants. They admitted to a 42% hike in the hydro bills; announced more costly wind turbines; played postal-code politics during the blackout; mismanaged the OPG, according to the auditor; mishandled a propane shortage; and the Ombudsman is now investigating Hydro One. These are the facts.

Enough is enough. When will this government admit that their energy strategy has failed Ontarians?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, she covered a lot, and I'm going to try to cover several of those items.

People in this province have a choice, okay? They have a choice between the PC approach, where their energy policy just doesn't add up—they claim they want to lower rates, but they have confirmed that they will spend \$15 billion on new nuclear energy that the province does not need. That will lead to major price increases.

They said, "First, cancel existing FIT contracts," and then their leader reversed course and said they wouldn't. Now Tory MPPs leave the impression that they would cancel existing wind contracts.

Their white paper on energy said they would create a special industrial rate. The only way they could do that is by shifting the burden onto individual consumers.

We have a number of significant programs to help families with their energy bills, including the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, the energy and property tax credit, and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, which that critic and that party voted against—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: While the Minister of Energy was playing hide-and-go-seek over the course of the last few months, I travelled to close to 30 ridings across Ontario to talk to families about hydro, doing the minister's homework for him.

This is what I found out, particularly about Hydro One: Seniors are spending more on their hydro bills than they are receiving in their OAS. Small businesses are closing under the threat of high bills and disconnection notices because of Hydro One. Families have lost thousands of dollars because of an incompetent billing scheme. This

government has turned Hydro One into public enemy number one.

A long time ago, when this minister was the mayor of Ottawa, he took decisive action against the Ottawa housing corporation because they failed the consumer and they failed the taxpayer. Now we see the Hydro One CEO doing the same thing. What has changed? What has changed you? Will you take decisive action?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased that the critic raised the question of the Hydro One issue. Mr. Speaker, Hydro One has 1.3 million customers, and a number of those customers have experienced unacceptable levels of inconvenience as a result of a new billing system. Prior to the Ombudsman's review, the CEO of Hydro One publicly apologized to the affected customers, and they have been working diligently to ensure that all outstanding issues are corrected.

While Hydro One is an independent crown corporation, our government shares in that apology. I have written to the Ombudsman and pledged the full co-operation of my office and the Ministry of Energy.

Hydro One continues to work tirelessly on this issue. Refunds and credits are being offered for errors, and all interest on these charges has been waived.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Last Wednesday, London's manufacturing sector took yet another hit with the announcement that Ohio-based Invacare Corp. was shutting the doors to its long-term-care-beds plant and cutting 70 workers. The 70 workers laid off at Invacare join a long list of plant closures in southwestern Ontario: 740 workers laid off at Heinz in Leamington, 500 laid off at Kellogg's in London and 100 laid off at Worthington Cylinders in Tilbury.

Premier, when is this government going to get serious about creating and preserving the good-paying manufacturing jobs that are the lifeblood of the southwestern economy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's a very important question, and I appreciate the member opposite asking it.

I want to start by saying, of course, that whenever there's a closure or a notice of layoffs, our first concern as a government is for those employees and their families, to make sure we do everything possible to help them, assist them under those difficult circumstances, and then also hopefully get them that next job. If it requires retraining, we are in a position to provide that kind of support as well. It's very important.

With regard to London and more generally the southwestern Ontario region, as I mentioned just a few minutes ago, we were very pleased last week—I think the member opposite was as well—with the announcement

of a \$10-billion export contract from General Dynamics in London, which is going to protect and preserve about 3,000 jobs. That's a contract over 14 years, Mr. Speaker, so it's the kind of stability that that particular sector expects and enjoys.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'll be speaking in the supplementary, if I have the opportunity, about some other investments as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from London—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: West.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you. Speaker, the fact is that 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost while this government has been sitting on its hands. Southwestern Ontario has been hardest hit by those job losses. A jobs strategy requires more than good labour adjustment practices and hoping that the feds hand out money. It should include initiatives like a job creation tax credit, something New Democrats have long called for, but this government refuses to act.

When is this government going to move on initiatives such as the job creation tax credit to begin to make up for the 300,000 good-paying jobs that have been lost under their watch?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope the NDP don't follow the lead of the Progressive Conservatives when they begin to talk down this province in terms of our hard-working employees or our manufacturing sector, which has done so well. They'll acknowledge as well, for example, in the auto sector, more than 12,500 new jobs created since the bottom of the recession.

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Also, I was in London just a couple of weeks ago, with the Minister of Health, actually, making a tremendous announcement with Natra, which is a chocolate company based in Europe. It chose London as its North American headquarters. It actually doesn't have a presence in this continent. It chose London because of the opportunities it provided there. I know that the member opposite also understands that the unemployment rate, which was unacceptably high in London—fortunately, we're seeing it come down. It was almost 9% roughly a year ago. It's now down significantly from that.

That doesn't mean that our work is done, and that's why important measures like the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which has created and retained, I think, up to about 8,000 jobs since its creation about a year and a half ago, are so important for our economy and for our workers.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, like the majority of Ontarians, I've been cheering on the other Ontarians from our own backyard who are proudly representing our great country of Canada and this great province at the Olympics in Sochi. My own riding of

Oakville serves as a great hub for athletes like Brianne Jenner and John Tavares. But to compete with the best in the world, it takes years of dedication, of training and support of all kinds to help our athletes reach events like the Olympics.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, would he please share with this House what our government is doing to support those high-performance athletes as well as the current and future Olympians and Paralympians?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question from my colleague from Oakville.

My ministry's Quest for Gold is a program that's an excellent example of our government's commitment to our high-performance athletes and para-athletes. Some of the main objectives of the program are to help athletes continue their pursuit of athletic excellence at the highest levels of national and international competition; encourage athletes to stay in Ontario to live and receive the training; enable athletes to successfully pursue excellence in sport while fulfilling their educational goals; and increase athletes' access to high-performance coaching.

Speaker, since it was established in 2006, in seven years, our government has provided Ontario athletes and coaches with more than \$80 million in support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for that wonderful response. I'm sure we can all agree that our athletes and para-athletes not only serve as ambassadors in sport but as leaders, as performers and as an inspiration to us all here back home.

As it turns out, Team Canada this year is the largest we've ever had for a Winter Olympics. It's represented by more Ontarians than any other province in this great country. Sixty-four athletes and 11 coaches from Ontario will be on Team Canada in hopes of winning gold in their respective sports.

With so many of our athletes competing in Sochi, Mr. Speaker, again through you to the minister, could he please tell us what our government is doing to specifically support Ontario's sports sector?

Hon. Michael Chan: Our government is pleased to support our athletes as they pursue athletic excellence. We are proud to support them at events like the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

I would like to once again congratulate the strong contingent of Ontario athletes on Team Canada, who will make our province proud as they compete for gold.

Speaker, these Ontarians and Canadians serve as an inspiration to us all. Past, present and future athletes and para-athletes with their stories and performances only reinforce the importance of developing community role models and to promote an active, healthy lifestyle. This is why, in 2013-14, our government has provided over \$23 million to our sports partners to achieve these goals.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. In the 12 months since your Wynne-Horwath Liberal-NDP coalition came to power, Ontario

has lost an additional 30,000 vital manufacturing jobs. Dozens of plants across our province have announced layoffs or outright closure since your Liberal coronation. Premier, southwestern Ontario has been especially hard-hit, with recent plant closings announced at Invacare, London—that was 70 jobs; Heinz, Leamington, 740 jobs; Kellogg's, London, 500 jobs; Worthington Cylinders, Tilbury, 100 jobs; Westcast Industries, Strathroy, 40 jobs; Imperial Oil lubricants, Sarnia, 60 jobs; Ethyl Corp., Corunna, 30 jobs.

Premier, why are so many factories closing under your watch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the member opposite has his list, so I'll go through my list, and I'll start in Dunnville with Original Foods. I was actually at the opening of that new company, where they moved here from Quebec—150 jobs created just last fall.

Armo Tool, just outside of London, which I know the member opposite knows well, was our first recipient of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund—14 jobs. Armstrong Milling, in Hagersville, 10 jobs; CenterLine, in Windsor, 31 jobs; Conestoga meats, outside of Kitchener and Breslau, 100 jobs there; Desch Canada, 10 jobs; Durose Manufacturing, another 12; Elmira Pet Products, in Elmira, 146 jobs protected and many more created, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on and on, from Tillsonburg to Cambridge, Wallaceburg, Guelph and St. Catharines.

It's unfortunate that the party opposite did not support us in creating a permanent fund for southwestern Ontario to create those exact manufacturing jobs that the member opposite seems to be so concerned about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Premier, on January 22, I wrote to you about the closure of Westcast in Strathroy. The reason for this closure is due to the high price of electricity coupled with Ontario's outdated labour policies and outdated apprenticeship ratios. In fact, Westcast's CEO wrote to me on January 7 and said, "If electricity rates do not become more affordable, Ontario risks losing important investments from companies like Westcast."

Premier, your careless approach has helped push Ontario's manufacturing sector into crisis. Some 30,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since you have become Premier of this province. Only Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs have put forward a jobs plan to help the thousands of people who are unemployed in Ontario today.

Premier, I ask again: How come so many manufacturing plants are closing under your watch, and why are you and NDP leader Andrea Horwath so determined to lead the race to the bottom?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich, coming from this party opposite that really hasn't

supported any of our jobs plans or efforts over the past few years. If they had had their way, back when the province supported the auto industry in 2009—which they did not support—we wouldn't even have an auto industry. It would have left for the United States or Mexico. Fortunately, we have created 12,500 new jobs in the auto sector alone.

Mr. Speaker, they're not even listening to their own party in Ottawa when Jim Flaherty, just a few weeks ago, talked about the manufacturing sector in this province and said it was bouncing back. Also, we have RBC, that came out with a report in December which indicated that they see significant recovery in the manufacturing sector in the two years ahead. It's going to help drive the recovery. Of course, with the Canadian dollar coming down, that's going to help as well. So we're making great strides.

I don't know why the member opposite and his party continue to talk down this economy, the hard-working Ontario workers that are working in the manufacturing sector, and the 700,000 people, that I'm very proud of, that contribute to manufacturing in this province.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. After months and months of constant pressure on the Liberal government from horse people, from the Fort Erie council and the NDP, the government finally listened and promised funding so that the Fort Erie Race Track can have live racing this coming season. However, one-time funding for this year alone is not a solution for the hundreds of families that depend on the Fort Erie Race Track.

Will the Premier commit to reinstating the slots-at-racetracks partnership and ensure that Fort Erie has a long and bright future?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, you know, it was gratifying when the leader of the third party began questioning about Fort Erie and horse racing when the by-election was on the horizon.

The fact is, we've been working on this plan; we've been working to restore horse racing across the province. We had the panel in place; we had their recommendations. I was determined to provide an opportunity for Fort Erie and the other tracks in the province to have a sustainable future.

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Now, the leader of the third party is asking whether we will bring back a non-accountable, inefficient plan. We are not going to do that. We have a strategy, Mr. Speaker. We have committed to investing \$400 million over the next five years, and we will continue to work with the industry to make sure that they have a sustainable future, as we worked with Fort Erie, by-election or not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, like it or not, this government waited until a few days before a provincial

by-election to announce funding for Fort Erie. I don't recall that they've announced any other funding.

The NDP stood shoulder to shoulder with the people of Fort Erie since day one—it's unfortunate that the Premier didn't even notice—and we will continue to push the government for a long-term solution and not just by-election promises.

Will the Premier do the right thing? Reinstate the slots-at-racetracks partnership so that horse racing can continue at the Fort Erie track and sustain over 1,000 jobs in the region for many, many years to come.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're working towards a five-year plan. We're working towards a five-year plan, and I think the people at Fort Erie know that.

Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party should know that when I met with the Fort Erie folks at a round table, there were horse people in the lobby of that building urging us to make an announcement sooner rather than later because they were making business decisions. The leader may not know that, and because she has chosen to link this to the by-election—that's her prerogative.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we were meeting with the folks in Fort Erie before there was a question raised in this House. We are working towards a long-term plan. Restoring horse racing in this province is something I committed to, and I have delivered on that.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Attorney General. Since 2008, over 65 municipalities have passed resolutions calling on the government to legislate against strategic lawsuits. Our government heard those concerns, and on June 4, 2013, the Attorney General introduced Bill 83, a proposal for the protection of public participation. It passed first reading.

This is an important bill that assists with an increase of access to justice for all Ontarians. Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please tell the House about the protection of public participation?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all say how great it is to be back here to discuss the issues of the day in an open and free democratic fashion, and the member is quite correct. This question is very timely, because this afternoon we will continue second reading debate on Bill 83.

We as a government have worked very hard to develop a proposal that balances the protection of public participation and freedom of expression with the protection of reputation and economic interest. We all know that if this bill is passed, it would protect citizens by allowing courts to quickly identify and deal with these strategic lawsuits, including a fast-track process, which requires that a request to dismiss must be heard by the court within 60 days. That is good for the system; it's good for all parties concerned, Speaker. That's why I urge everyone here to support Bill 83.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's good to hear of our government's commitment in balancing the protection of public

participation while also considering the protection of reputation and economic interest. This provides a made-in-Ontario solution based on the consensus recommendations of an expert advisory panel and extensive stakeholder consultations.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to assisting with the early identification of strategic lawsuits, could the Attorney General please inform this House of other ways in which the bill assists in protecting public participation?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I think we all recognize, Speaker, that reputation is very important to each and every one of us, and we have worked very hard to develop a proposal that balances the interests of the defendants and the plaintiffs in these defamation suits—the protection of public participation and freedom of expression against the protection of reputation and economic interests.

Speaker, the proposed legal test for identifying strategic suits is carefully balanced to ensure that lawsuits that seriously harm reputation, business or personal interests of others can continue. On the other hand, causes with no merit or with merely technical merit but without evidence of substantial harm would be dismissed within that 60-day period.

The government's continued support of legislation such as this particular bill ensures that all parties' interests will be considered in the civil process, and I hope that this bill passes with the unanimous consent of this House as soon as possible, Speaker.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. Premier, since your party came to office, the province's manufacturing sector has lost over 330,000 manufacturing jobs. That's a city the size of London waking up with no jobs, few prospects and losing hope.

Since you became Premier, roughly 40 companies have announced Ontario closures. There's RockTenn in my riding of Burlington, Kraft in Oakville, Novartis in Mississauga, ACCO in Brampton, Wescast in Strathroy, ExxonMobil in Belleville and Sandvik in North Bay—sadly, the list of closures goes on and on.

Premier, most new employees get three months' probation; you've had a year. When will you make jobs a priority?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I have to say, I still don't understand why you didn't support the Cisco investment in this province, which is creating 3,700 high-tech, good jobs over the next 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, our manufacturing sector—we've resolved it since the bottom of the recession. We've actually created 25,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector across this province. Many of them, of course, are in the part of the province that the member opposite represents.

But let me tell you what isn't in their jobs plan, curiously, but obviously is a preoccupation of the party

opposite: their right-to-work plan, which, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is the centrepiece of their jobs plan. But it's going to be a right to work for less. It's a scheme that will lower wages and lessen benefits for all workers in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to talk more about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: So I'm curious, Minister: How are we supposed to judge your numbers? It's not 3,100; it's 1,700 for Cisco.

But, nevertheless, I'll give you this: You've been consistent—consistent in driving businesses out of Ontario, and it's not hard to figure out why. Ontario has the highest rates in North America. Small and medium businesses are drowning in red tape. We have the highest WSIB rates in the country, which cripples businesses' ability to hire. Higher bottom-line costs, more bureaucratic headaches—that's not exactly a winning economic strategy.

You need to step up your game or step aside. When are you going to show the people of Ontario a real job plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, it is 3,700 new jobs by Cisco, and the member opposite needs to get her facts straight.

Also, in terms of the right-to-work-for-less plan, it's not something that we're obviously preoccupied with because the party opposite is advocating—many of their own members are very concerned about its potential impact. They know that it's a job killer. It's going to drive down wages, and it's going to hurt job creation.

I know they're trying to distract the public by focusing on this alleged million jobs plan, but the centrepiece of that is the right-to-work legislation, the Wisconsin-like legislation, this policy which we know is so extreme that even the member opposite's own party is trying to seek some clarity on, asking their leader to come clean as to what kind of damage he's going to do to our economy through this right-to-work legislation. Eleven PC candidates in northern Ontario are concerned. They're turning to us as well to make sure that this explosive policy file of the PC Party doesn't see the light of day. The former PC candidate in Niagara Falls is on record as saying—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GENDER IDENTITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Last week, Avery Edison, a trans woman, was held at Maplehurst Correctional, a provincial men's facility. Being confined in a jail for men, Ms. Edison's health and safety were put at dire risk.

In Ontario, we have Toby's Law, where gender identity and gender expression are protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Can the minister explain why Toby's Law is not being respected?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for this excellent question. Yes, this issue was brought to my attention, and so it was of concern to me, too. I think that the problem was resolved, and we have a policy in place to ensure that the process is followed very closely. Ministry officials conduct a screening process for every inmate who is admitted into provincial custody. Part of that process is identifying the individual's sexual identity, and an individual may self-identify as transgendered or the facility may be notified by authorities that the individual is transgendered.

So correctional officers take self-identification into account, and in the supplementary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'll allow the supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Last week, I wrote to the minister urging an immediate investigation into Ms. Edison's confinement in a jail for men. Clearly, whatever policies are in place are not working. Everyone involved in this detention should be trained in how to treat trans people with dignity and respect. Such an incident must not reoccur.

I'm going to ask again: Will the minister be launching an investigation into this matter?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to assure the member from the opposition that it is not going to happen again, but unfortunately, I cannot say that. But we will make sure that an investigation, first of all, is being conducted when these things happen, and the policy will be reviewed to make sure that everybody is treated as they should be and an incident like the one that happened does not happen again.

Of course, the safety of individuals and those in correctional facilities is taken very seriously, and we want to treat these people with respect and dignity. I'll make sure that we reinforce the procedure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Waterloo on a point of order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order under standing order section 23(i): "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

The House leader earlier today accused my question of being "mischievous." In fact, the budget of 2013 passed in May. The interviews are not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I look for the day when none of us are mischievous.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests. The member from Mississippi—

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Carleton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure, at a bit of a sad moment in our lives, to introduce two of my guests, one of whom has a broken heart at this point: Yvette Rath, my friend, who was a partner with Bob Mackie, who recently died of a heart attack, and her friend, a good friend of mine, Stefanos Karatopis, who is president of the Niagara Landowners Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Sorry about your grief.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BOB MACKIE

Mr. Jack MacLaren: My statement is a tribute to Bob Mackie, who recently died. Bob Mackie died of heart failure on February 8, 2014. He was 60 years old, but he was young in spirit and very active in his community. His life partner, Yvette Rath, is here with us today, sitting in the members' gallery.

Bob was one of the founding members of the Niagara Landowners Association and was their current president. Under Bob's leadership, the Niagara Landowners Association grew in numbers and strength. He helped many local landowner members in their fight to protect their property rights from the wrongful intrusions and interferences by the local conservation authority and the Niagara Escarpment Commission—people like David White, Mark Barnsfield and Jim Williams.

Bob had been fighting his own battle with the Niagara Escarpment Commission over the terrible crime of running an archery training facility for brain-injured people on his rural property. His fight with the Niagara Escarpment Commission had been going on in court for seven years and is not over yet, but the stress took its toll on Bob. He is no longer here to fight for his rights or to help his neighbours.

But his fight was not in vain, and we will not fail him. The Niagara Escarpment Commission is an unnecessary, outdated government body that is wrongfully interfering with people's property rights. It is time for the Niagara Escarpment Commission to be gone.

I will use my private member's bill this year to repeal the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. The bill will be called the Bob Mackie Act. We do this in memory of Bob.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Miss Monique Taylor: It's very good to be back in the Legislature, but it was also really great to be back in my community of Hamilton Mountain and spend some time with my residents over the past couple of months. It's always good to hear what's on people's minds and to learn about the challenges that they're facing.

I heard about some of the cutbacks in our health care, such as the cancellation of cataract surgery, which created many anxious weeks for a number of my seniors. I also heard from families, as I have over the past 18 months, about the planned closure of schools. They don't feel that the ARC process addresses all the issues. It doesn't recognize the impact that the closures have on the entire community.

One of the main problems is the outdated funding formula. This funding formula encourages school boards to close schools, when we could be taking a different approach. Instead, the funding formula should promote schools as community hubs. It should encourage the use of schools to meet a range of needs in our community and around it. They could be used for recreation. They could be used for health services. They could be used to deliver social services.

Many parents chose to move to a particular area because it had a school in the neighbourhood, and they are angry that that has been taken away. What it's done is pitted schools against each other. Instead, declining enrolment could be an opportunity to develop innovative ways to utilize the space and keep the schools open. A changed funding formula would help that.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, the eve of January 31 marked the arrival of the Year of the Horse and, with it, 15 days of celebration by our Chinese community.

People born in the Year of the Horse are said to be a bit like horses: energetic, animated and active. They love being in a crowd. They learn to be independent quickly, like foals that walk within minutes of being born. They have a straightforward and positive attitude towards life. They are recognized for their communication skills and are remarkably witty.

The lunar new year is a time for family and friends to gather and reflect on the blessings of the past year and to look forward to the year ahead with hope and determination.

The Chinese community makes up 35% of my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River. I want to thank them for their contributions to our community and for inviting me to their many celebrations. I appreciated being joined by many of my colleagues, spending time with friends and family and meeting new people, and I particularly enjoyed the various festivities. Handing out red envelopes as a symbol of good luck for the year to come was one of the highlights in our community.

Although Chinese New Year officially ended on February 14, I wish all Chinese Canadians in Scarborough and Ontario a happy, healthy and prosperous Year of the Horse.

Xin Nian Kuai Le. Gong Hay Fat Choy. Xie Xie.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, I'm very honoured today to stand in this place and speak on behalf of the

people of Wellington–Halton Hills on this first day of the spring sitting of the Ontario Legislature—although with the weather we're currently enduring, it hardly seems like spring.

This winter has been one for the books, and we'll never forget the Christmas ice storm of 2013—but it wasn't all bad. All across the province, neighbour helped neighbour with whatever they needed, families spent time together, and most importantly, we showed our caring for one another.

Many of our local municipal councillors and staff postponed or interrupted their own Christmas celebrations to provide the needed local leadership. Hydro One and local utility staff worked 24/7 in the cold temperatures to restore power to their affected customers. They were all magnificent and deserve our sincere thanks for a job well done.

Now we must deal with the aftermath. We need to strike a select committee of this Legislature to review the province's emergency preparedness protocols, to seek better communication and quicker responses.

I call upon the government to review the municipal requests for financial assistance for legitimate ice storm cleanup costs. I'm aware that the town of Halton Hills, the town of Erin and the township of Guelph/Eramosa are seeking such assistance. They hope to receive a favourable response by March 1. I urge the government to respond to our municipal partners without delay.

SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements. The member from Algoma—no—

Mr. John Vanthof: Timiskaming–Cochrane, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Timiskaming–Cochrane. I got the two of you mixed up. My apologies.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm better looking.

In 2012, construction began on one of three 10-megawatt solar farms in the city of Temiskaming Shores. The sites were carefully chosen. They did not encroach on agricultural land or on other local land uses. The company that was granted the OPA contract was Canadian Solar, a large publicly traded company. Local contractors were eager to begin on the project.

As construction started, it was announced that upon completion, the projects would be transferred to TransCanada Energy. Since residents of our region have a long-standing relationship with TransCanada PipeLines, they were further encouraged by this development. A project backed by a contract from the Ontario Power Authority and owned by two reputable companies—Canadian Solar and TransCanada Energy—was viewed as an economic boon for the area but has since turned into a nightmare.

The project was subcontracted, and then sub-subcontracted, and some of the players along the line did not pay their bills, so local contractors are left with hundreds of thousands of dollars of unpaid invoices. Other project managers arrived, only to claim that they

were not responsible for the unpaid bills. Local contractors are in danger of losing their hard-earned family businesses.

I have written to the Minister of Energy to make him aware of the situation and to ask him to direct OPA to place a hold on the power purchase agreement until all local contractors are paid.

When the gas plant was moved in southern Ontario, the government decided to keep TransCanada Energy whole. The least they could do in this case is to ensure that local contractors get paid for work completed in good faith.

AGINCOURT RECREATION CENTRE

Ms. Soo Wong: In December, the city of Toronto and surrounding municipalities were struck by a major ice storm unlike any other.

1510

As the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, I hosted one of the largest warming centres at the Agincourt Recreation Centre, and I'm very grateful to all the volunteers who came out to help their neighbours. Together we knocked on doors to check on our seniors, delivered baskets of food and provided support at designated warming centres across the city.

I want to formally recognize the many volunteers, from local youth to the Red Cross, and the staff at Agincourt Rec Centre. I'm going to name them, Mr. Speaker; I'm going to speak really fast:

Angus Ho, Cherie Wai, Deon Hua, Grace Tsui, Josephine Huynh, Kevin Vuong, Kristoffer Kwan, Martin Tam, Merlin Zhao, Michael Huang, Rowley Luo, Sarah Tsui, Tim Mui, Winston Li, Kris Flores, Andrew Fialkow, Victoria Humphreys, Tyler Dorman, Matthew Lee, Eric Sin, Gina Siva, Lisa Young, Adam Wan Bok Nale, Malinda Mahinda, Reggie Andreas, Vanessa Lin, Benson Lam, Belinda Kwan, A.J. Sivagnanam, Trevor Baxter, Alan Lee, Benjamin Liang, Dominic Bogcaki, Mayooran Perinparajah, Jenny Molina, Jennifer Courage, Matt Garber, James Chen, Kashyap Gosai, Karen MacFarlane, Shanna Morales, Fiona Young, Karyn Lau, Julie McColvin-St. Clair, Linda Koehler, Gary Sanger, Tim Krissilas, Debra Smith, Sebastian McKerracher, Lora Tanfara, Scott Dempster, Terrance Santhakumar and Ross White.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the volunteers who have volunteered—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Members' statements.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jim Wilson: Today I rise to speak of issues I heard at the agricultural round table in my riding last week. Over 80 people participated in what turned into a town hall type of discussion. The feeling in the room was both friendly and frustrating.

There were various issues discussed at the meeting. Roughly half of the comments revolved around this government's approval of non-agricultural projects on prime agricultural land, including, for example, wind and solar projects in my riding, as well as residential and estate-type developments. Two specific projects that people are upset about are the Midhurst secondary plan and the proposed Aria solar farm in Springwater township.

Another issue discussed was the escalating price of hydro and the fact that farmers literally can no longer afford to pay their energy bills.

Several people spoke to me about this government's outrageous proposal for a 10-cent-per-litre hike on the gas tax so that the Liberals can build subways in Toronto. It was noted that Premier Wynne must really think of people in Ontario as endless revenue tools.

We heard from people in the horse racing sector who are angry with this government's decimation of what once was a prosperous industry. It was noted that the horse industry as a whole is half of what it was before the Liberals arbitrarily decided to cancel the Slots at Race-tracks Program.

We heard from farmers concerned over regulation and obtrusive red tape. One meat processor spoke about being asked to provide the same paperwork over and over, creating a never-ending cycle of unnecessary intrusions into his daily livelihood.

Clearly, the people of my riding, and the farmers in particular, are very disappointed with this government and they want change.

COVENANT HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: On a more positive note, I rise in the House today to recognize Covenant House in Toronto. I want the members to know we're joined today by two members of the staff of Covenant House: Julie Neubauer and Erin Boudreau, who is no stranger to this place.

Covenant House is Canada's largest homeless youth agency. They educate and advocate for change to help at-risk and homeless youth by influencing public policy and delivering prevention and awareness programs—but they're much more than a shelter. They offer about 3,000 kids annually the widest range of life-changing services under one roof, including education, employment and job training, counselling and health care. To do all this, it relies on donors for 80% of its annual budget.

This February, they launched the first-ever Covenant House Month to raise awareness and funds to help homeless youth. The month is being proclaimed by the city of Toronto and is recognized by the Ontario government.

Speaker, the myth persists that homeless youth are rebelling against parental authority, but the harsh reality is that most are fleeing or being forced out of homes where there is abuse and neglect and a very high risk of violence or exploitation.

Please join me in wishing Covenant House a very, very successful February.

MONESTIME FAMILY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Tonight at city hall in Toronto, it will be my distinct honour and pleasure to celebrate the opening of a photo exhibit as part of Black History Month. You see, this exhibit pays tribute to the 50th anniversary of the election of the first black mayor in Canada, who just happened to reside in my riding of Nipissing and was someone I knew. Dr. Saint-Firmin Monestime became mayor of the town of Mattawa in 1964 and was instrumental in the town's development during that time. My hope is that this exhibit provides an opportunity to educate people about Dr. Monestime's tremendous influence in our riding and his role in moving forward the fundamental Canadian values of respect, tolerance, understanding, diversity and multiculturalism.

His tremendous legacy continues to live on through his family, who have made their own mark in our riding of Nipissing. His daughter Vala has spent 35 years as an administrator of the Algonquin Nursing Home. Her contributions to the community resulted in her being awarded a Queen's jubilee medal in 2012. I'll be introducing her family very shortly. Sasha works in farming in the Stouffville area, but we'll get him back to Nipissing in the near future; I'm confident of that. Yura Monestime is a well-known TV videographer and an instructor at Canadore College.

Without Dr. Monestime and his family, I can say without hesitation that our communities in Nipissing would much poorer. On behalf of our residents, I thank them for their contributions and for the advancement of the caring, accepting society we all strive to maintain and embrace across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That completes our statements. I thank all members for their statements.

The member for Nipissing would like to stand on a point of order.

VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to introduce the family and friends of Dr. Saint-Firmin Monestime. We have Doug Mackey; Paul Mackey; John Drechsler; Bonnie Drechsler; Jodie Porter; Eden Porter; Sasha Monestime and his daughters Natalia Monestime, Tatyana Monestime and Adriana Monestime; and Vala Monestime-Belter and her husband, Wayne Belter. Joining us shortly will be Yura Monestime and Cindy Boston.

I thank you for the opportunity to introduce this family.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated February 18, 2014, of the Standing

Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAMIL HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE TAMOUL

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month / Projet de loi 156, Loi proclamant le mois de janvier Mois du patrimoine tamoul.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Todd Smith: This bill proclaims the month of January in each year as Tamil Heritage Month.

Further to that, I would seek unanimous consent that the orders for second and third reading of this bill be now called and that the question be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is seeking unanimous consent to put the question for second and third reading. Agreed?

I heard a no.

A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think the member is aware that with private members' bills of this nature, there is a process amongst House leaders. We certainly, I think, are very supportive on this side of the House, but I encourage him to raise it with the House leader to raise it at the next House leaders' meeting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order?

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Letters were sent, but unfortunately, the House leaders have been unable to meet for many, many months.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think that's the end of this.

1520

FINANCIAL ADVISORS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES CONSEILLERS FINANCIERS

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to regulate financial advisors / Projet de loi 157, Loi réglementant les conseillers financiers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, the explanatory note is a page and a half long, so I'll take some highlights from the explanatory note.

The bill enacts a new act, the Financial Advisors Act, 2014, to regulate financial advisors in Ontario. The act establishes the Office of the Director to administer the act.

The act requires that persons who act or hold themselves out as financial advisors be registered. A person who wishes to bring an action for commission or other remuneration for services in connection with the sale of financial advice must be registered, or the action may be stayed. Registrations are not transferrable.

The act gives the director power to deal with complaints made about registrants and provides powers to inspect registrants and conduct investigations.

The minister has the power to establish a code of ethics for financial advisors. A discipline committee and an appeals committee are to be established to determine whether registrants have failed to comply with the code.

The bill contains amendments that will update the act when the Delegated Administrative Authorities Act, 2012, comes into force. It also contains consequential amendments to the Collection Agencies Act, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009, and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996.

I am pleased today that Greg Pollock and Kristin Doucet from Advocis are here for the introduction of this bill.

MILLION JOBS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA CRÉATION D'UN MILLION D'EMPLOIS

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to promote job creation in Ontario /
Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à promouvoir la création
d'emplois en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I just want to say I'm very excited to bring forward an economic plan that will put people back to work in our province and help young people achieve their goals right here in the province of Ontario.

If passed, this legislation will produce more well-paying jobs and increase take-home pay by ensuring that energy is affordable, that taxes come down, that debt comes down and by ending the bureaucratic runaround that gets in the way of job creation.

As we saw last week in the by-elections, families and job creators are tired of waiting for the government to bring forward a jobs plan. They want to see action now.

I want to say to my colleagues here in the assembly that I look forward to working with you—and our party, of course, and the other parties, too—to ensure that the Million Jobs Act gets passed as quickly as possible to provide hope to families across the province and bring in more well-paying jobs.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Mr. Takhar moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to temporary help agencies /
Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les
normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de
placement temporaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement, please.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, this bill would amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000. This bill has three objectives. The first objective is to require all temporary employment agencies to have and maintain a valid licence to operate in Ontario. The second objective is to ensure that the employees operating under the temp agencies receive 80% of the total wages paid for the work they do for the clients. The third objective is to make sure how many people can be employed as temporary help in any given organization. So the purpose here is that no more than 25% of the total hours worked in any organization could be the temporary-help people.

This is an issue that affects temporary workers province-wide, and I look forward to a healthy discussion as this bill advances. As always, I look forward to comments from all of my colleagues from all sides and for any constructive ideas to improve this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of bills. Last call for introduction of bills.

I am going to take a short, teachable moment and remind all members that the normal procedure for private members' bills is to read from the explanatory notes. As the member from Sudbury indicated, he had over a two-page explanatory note but decided to shrink what his comments were out of the explanatory notes—and we stay for debate when the bill is introduced for all of the other comments. The bill is supposed to be just described inside of the explanatory notes for the private members' bills. I would appreciate co-operation on that particular issue. Thank you very much.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forth a notice of motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr. Takhar and Mr. Dickson exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Takhar assumes ballot item number 71 and Mr. Dickson assumes ballot item number 76 and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 71 and 76 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Chisholm township property owners concerned with high MPAC assessments believe Chisholm township's inflated, unaffordable municipal taxes are the outcome of unfair and poor property comparisons and valuations and are resulting in high property assessment; and

"Whereas the signatures obtained from the undersigned represent the taxpayers of Chisholm who are unhappy with their property assessment; and

"Whereas the 405 undersigned have agreed to have Chisholm township mayor Leo Jobin represent them in their dispute with MPAC with regard to inflated assessment comparables, unaffordable municipal taxes, which they believe to be a direct result of MPAC's high property assessments in Chisholm township;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. to sit down with the Chisholm township mayor and other officials to review and adjust the most recent property assessment determinations by MPAC for Chisholm township."

I agree with this petition, Speaker, and sign my name and give it to page Jessie.

1530

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes to me from Mr. Darwin Brunne from Whitefish, in my riding. He collected 245 names. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name and will ask our new page Robin to bring it to the Clerk.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I fully support their petition, Mr. Speaker, and I'll give it to page Anne.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli have publicly stated that there will be no time extensions for large-scale FIT contracts in Ontario, and the Ontario Power Authority CEO, Colin Andersen, has stated the authority is expecting developers to meet contract commitments; and

"Whereas the Premier, minister and the power authority must recognize that damage to our rural area from being under continuing threat by industrial wind turbine

developers for three years is serious and unacceptable; and

“Whereas the FIT contracts for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—all on or near the Oak Ridges Moraine and in the former Manvers township in the city of Kawartha Lakes—have already been extended for one year or longer;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario, the Minister of Energy the Honourable Bob Chiarelli, and the Ontario Power Authority not issue any further time extensions for FIT contracts and, in particular, for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—before or after expiry of such contracts. We are advised, and we believe, that the ‘force majeure’ clause in the FIT contracts is completely inapplicable to these projects; accordingly, we respectfully further request the Legislature to instruct the Minister of Energy to adhere to his assurance that extensions will no longer be granted to wind project proponents who have no contractual right to such an extension and who fail to meet their contractual commitments.”

This was brought to me by Jane Zednik and Heather Stauble, and I'll pass it on to page Jessie.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Limestone District School Board (LDSB) has decided, in the face of overwhelming opposition from the residents of Kingston, to request that the Ministry of Education provide funds to build a new school and close the Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute (KCVI) and Queen Elizabeth Collegiate and Vocational Institute (QECVI); and

“Whereas KCVI is the most academically successful in the Limestone board; is full and generates funds for the board; has a socio-economically diverse student body; enjoys a unique location adjacent to Queen's that enhances learning opportunities for students; is the oldest public high school in Ontario, significant to the history of the city, the province and the nation and is housed in a distinctive, heritage building; is the only downtown high school and plays a crucial role in the vitality of Kingston; and

“Whereas the LDSB named the current QECVI site as the likely location for a new high school and has no viable alternatives, which is a site only 1.5 kilometres from Regiopolis-Notre Dame, a thriving, academically successful Catholic high school that serves the same community; and therefore the LDSB is proposing that two large high schools be located in close proximity in the north end and none in downtown Kingston, a distribution of schools that will lead to increased busing, attendant pollution, and the decline of Kingston's urban businesses and neighbourhoods; and

“Whereas in the event funds are not available for a new school, the LDSB's second option preserves KCVI

in downtown Kingston and repurposes QECVI as an alternative education centre, a proposal that has enormous public support; enables a more rational distribution of schools for the urban environment of central Kingston; best provides for the needs of all affected students; retains a jewel in Kingston's urban heritage; avoids the enormous expenditures entailed by new construction, and therefore costs Ontario taxpayers less and is in every way more environmentally, fiscally and socially responsible;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refuse the Limestone District School Board's request for funds to build a new high school in the city of Kingston.”

Madam Speaker, I've signed my name and give this petition to page Abbey for presentation.

SHALE BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation closed public access to Shale Beach off Highway 26 in the town of Blue Mountains suddenly and with no consultation; and

“Whereas the closure will impact fishermen, swimmers and visitors who have been frequenting the beach for generations with no problem; and

“Whereas the closure will remove one of the only wheelchair-accessible fishing locations in the area; and

“Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government won't let Ontarians enjoy anything for free anymore without implementing a new tax or a new fee;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Transportation immediately restore access to Shale Beach so that residents can continue to enjoy the beach and all that it has to offer for generations to come.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

“Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

“Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

“Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this petition, will affix my signature, and give it to page Aqil to deliver to the table.

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of Todd Smith.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Coast Guard Auxiliary units are oftentimes the first responders to any emergency situation that occurs on our waterways;

"Whereas the use of green flashing lights by Coast Guard volunteers in their vehicles would help to cut down on their response time by alerting others on the roadways to their presence;

"Whereas these flashing green lights are currently prohibited from use in Coast Guard volunteers' vehicles under regulations in the Highway Traffic Act that restrict the use of flashing green lights to only the vehicles of volunteer firefighters and ministry-prescribed medical responders;

"Whereas the flashing green lights cost nothing to the government as they are bought and paid for by the volunteers themselves;

"Whereas, if the Coast Guard Auxiliary units were allowed the use of these flashing green lights in their vehicles, it would cut down the transportation time on the roadways, and this cut in time could very well mean the difference between life and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Coast Guard Auxiliary units either become prescribed medical responders, or a change to the act that adds ministry-prescribed" volunteer "first responders access to the use of the flashing green emergency light."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to page Jo Jo.

1540

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"December 9, 2013, was a precedent-setting day in this Legislature for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a heartfelt and official apology challenging all Ontarians 'to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else' when she publicly, on behalf of the people of Ontario, took responsibility for the profound suffering of the former residents of Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres

'who were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences.'

"Whereas the institutional model of care at each of these centres has been acknowledged in the public apology to have been deeply flawed whereby residents 'suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care'; and

"Whereas it was acknowledged that former residents 'were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity'; and

"Whereas all of the class actions for former residents at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres have reached settlement agreements with the province for a combined total of \$67.7 million; and

"Whereas a \$67.7-million settlement is wholly inadequate as compensation to the thousands of former residents and their families to redress the long-term debilitating impact of this harm; and

"Whereas all legal costs of \$15.6 million are being taken from the combined settlement total before any compensation is paid to the former residents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that Premier Kathleen Wynne be led by her sense of moral purpose and use her power as Premier to pay the legitimate legal costs of Koskie Minsky LLP from Toronto who acted on behalf of the Huronia, Southwestern and Rideau Regional Centre class members, from sources over and above the combined \$67.7-million settlement."

I sign my signature to this petition and give it to page Kevin.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise to support a member's petition, from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and I'm pleased to present the petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

That was spearheaded by Lindsay councillor Gord James. I sign my name to that and present that petition.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Betty Schneider for sending this petition to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

"Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

"Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada's draft renewable energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

"Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given."

I agree with this petition and I'm happy to sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to welcome my colleagues back from their winter break and look forward

to getting down to work and improving the lives of Ontario residents.

Today, I'm pleased to speak to a government bill, Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act. In a democratic society, the right of citizens to speak freely and to criticize must not be limited by the fear of retaliatory lawsuits. As a strong union member, I've always felt that I had the right to speak out. Today, I'm sure my colleagues will confirm that from time to time I like to share my opinions.

However, increasingly, constituents and organizations are being silenced by the fear of being sued.

While our party welcomes the introduction of this legislation, I must note that in the past Andrea Horwath has introduced anti-SLAPP legislation twice.

The legislation is long overdue and will bring Ontario in line with similar legislation found in Quebec and about half of the United States.

In general, we are supportive of the bill as it incorporates most of the 2010 government-appointed panel recommendations. However, there are still several aspects which need to be examined in committee to amend the bill to make it better for all those concerned.

Strategic lawsuits against public participation, or SLAPPs, are tactical moves made to intimidate local residents or activists engaged in a fight with a developer or a corporation that can afford expensive lawyers. According to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the effect of SLAPPs is to silence voices through intimidation and the threat of expensive litigation. Resources are redirected to deal with a legal matter and away from the original public criticism, much like how at question period the government answers the questions in the head instead of answering them correctly.

The CCLA is concerned about the potential misuse of the civil justice system by powerful litigants to quash meaningful counter-perspectives and dissent on issues of public importance. They are also concerned about the chilling effects SLAPPs can have on other potential participants in public debate.

Madam Speaker, I also share these concerns. Activities that attract SLAPPs include citizens reporting environmental violations, filing complaints with government agencies, contacting the media, speaking at public meetings, participating at hearings before administrative tribunals or engaging in public campaigns. Increasingly, we are seeing wealthy individuals and corporations silencing the voices of concerned citizens. As is often the case, the plaintiffs are not residents, nor do they have any other commitments to the area other than their own personal or corporate gain.

A perfect example of the effects of a SLAPP is the case of Geranium Corp. v. Innisfil District Association. Geranium is the developer behind the proposed Big Bay Point mega-marina and resort on Lake Simcoe. In responding to multiple lawsuits, an unprecedented claim for \$3.2 million in OMB costs against the Innisfil District Association and its lawyers, one defendant swore in an affidavit to the OMB:

"I feel threatened, harassed, and intimidated by Geranium's legal claims, and fear exposure to lawsuits and the costs associated with defending" myself.

"I do not write letters to the town,"—anymore—"county, province or local papers in fear of repercussions from the Big Bay Point developers, Kimvar Enterprises Inc., and Mr. Earl Rumm. From fear of being implicated in a lawsuit myself, I would not write a letter or voice my personal opinions about the project in any way whatsoever.

"I do not have the funds or means to defend myself in a lawsuit, which increases my fear of publicly speaking out as an individual. I would not testify at an OMB hearing with the lawsuits pending and the threat of new legal actions. I would not be able to defend myself financially from such a wealthy developer."

Residents were sued for damages totalling over \$100 million for defamation, speaking out against the development. The town's lawyer was sued for conspiracy after recommending council oppose the project. Not one of these lawsuits made it to trial. All were either dismissed by the court or withdrawn. It's bad enough that they intimidate local activists, but to intimidate a local government official from doing their job is simply outrageous, appalling and unacceptable.

I wish this was the only example, but unfortunately I have more.

Dylan Powell of Marineland Animal Defense is currently facing a \$1.5-million SLAPP suit launched when he decided to shine a light on Marineland's operations. In 2012, the Toronto Star broke a story that Marineland was burying animals on-site in mass graves without permits. A \$1.5-million claim was filed against Dylan and Marineland Animal Defense, thus changing the media focus from mass animal graves to a mass lawsuit. Marineland Canada filed six lawsuits over the period from December 2012 until June 2013. Those suits centre on former employees who have come forward with testimony against the park, the Toronto Star, and activists who have educated the public about that testimony and more. Damages claimed by Marineland in total stretch beyond \$12 million.

1550

In 2004, Marineland Canada filed a SLAPP suit against the advocacy group Niagara Action for Animals and organizers Catherine Ens and Dan Wilson. That suit, a \$250,000 libel claim, revolved around a year-old letter that the organization had written to a company educating them on the captive-animal facility and urging them to take their company picnics elsewhere. For two years, they organized against the suit, and finally Marineland Canada dropped it.

As you can see, Speaker, SLAPPs are a serious problem and a threat to public participation.

In 2010, the Ontario government struck a panel, chaired by University of Toronto law school dean Mayo Moran, to advise it on how to draft the legislation to stop developers or other plaintiffs from filing lawsuits meant only to intimidate critics. The panel recommended that

the plaintiff would have to prove that the damage he or she faced was greater than the harm to freedom of expression for the case to continue. The panel recommended that if a plaintiff were found to have acted with an improper motive in filing a SLAPP, the defendant would be entitled to damages.

As in most things in law, it goes to intent. The question is, what recourse would a community group have against a corporation whose intent was clearly intimidation?

What we need is anti-SLAPP legislation which promotes four important objectives:

- to encourage individuals to express themselves on matters of public interest;

- to promote broad public participation in debates on matters of public interest;

- to discourage the use of litigation as a means of unduly limiting expression on matters of public interest; and

- to reduce the risk that participation by the public in debates on matters of public interest will be hampered by fear of legal action.

While this bill is a step in the right direction, it still falls short. This morning during question period, the Liberal Attorney General was asked several softball questions about Bill 83 by the Liberal member from Brampton West. While the Attorney General did his best to promote Bill 83, he overlooked a few important aspects which I'd like to share with him.

The Attorney General stated that his government has "worked very hard to develop a proposal that balances the protection of public participation and freedom of expression with the protection of reputation and economic interest." I must ask the Attorney General how this government expects to protect public participation and freedom of expression without reversing the burden of proof. The test for dismissal is probably the most significant feature of any anti-SLAPP legislation, as it sets out the legal test that has to be met for early dismissal of SLAPP suits.

As the bill is currently written, the defendant has the burden of proving to the court that the communication which is the subject of the lawsuit is a matter of public interest. The plaintiff can make any initial accusation they want without proving that it is not meant to silence public participation. Instead, community members and advocacy groups are presumed guilty until proven innocent. This is a complete reversal of the most basic principles upon which our justice system is based: that we are all innocent until proven guilty. As a result, a heavy financial burden may be placed on the groups to prove that their communications were in the public interest. They must also divert precious resources to defending themselves in court.

To the Attorney General: How does this promote public participation and public good? In fact, it does the reverse. This will continue to limit and suppress public debate and discussion. It is only after the lawsuit is shown by the defendant to involve communication on a

matter of public interest that the onus shifts to the plaintiff to show that (a) on a factual record before the court, the plaintiff's claim has substantial merit, and (b) there are substantial grounds to believe that the defendant has no valid defence.

The Attorney General also stated that if the bill is passed, it would protect citizens by allowing courts to quickly identify and deal with these strategic lawsuits, including a fast-track process which requires that a request to dismiss must be heard by the court within 60 days.

I must question this assertion, given that the bill does not specify timelines for filing of responding affidavits by the plaintiff or mention anything about the defendant filing additional affidavits, as per the panel recommendation of 2010. Speaker, this could result in delays in the hearing of the motion if a date has been set but the plaintiff has failed to file a responding affidavit.

Furthermore, I would like to add that this bill limits a stay of a tribunal proceeding only to tribunals that fall within the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, including the OMB. The panel had recommended that the stay provisions apply to both an administrative or a policy proceeding, including the Environmental Bill of Rights registry or resolutions made at municipal council meetings.

I would like to know why the government felt a need to limit the stay of a tribunal proceeding only to tribunals that fall within the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. If the government was truly committed to protecting the fundamental freedom of expression like it claims, it would expand the provisions of this bill. When citizens cannot speak out against issues in their own community, we have a serious problem.

We support the intent of the bill because it supports communities against developers and the government-appointed, unaccountable OMB. As legislators, it is our job to protect the most basic rights of our constituents. This should not be a partisan issue, Speaker; this should definitely not be partisan.

Likewise, when it comes to protecting the rights of children, there should be unanimous, non-partisan support; yet, as we know, the government and the opposition deliberately blocked Bill 71, which would protect child performers. All parties supported this bill. It passed in committee, it moved on to this House, and games started to be played by the House leaders. As a result, since December 12, child performers have continued to lack adequate protection.

On this side of the aisle, we have continued to support legislation that protects the most vulnerable in our society, whether it's communities and activists in the David-and-Goliath battle against developers and corporations, or it is legislation to protect children.

Madam Speaker, the Liberals and Conservatives love to talk about protecting the rights of Ontario residents, and yet, when it comes to action, we see nothing. They have the opportunity to show they are serious about protecting children this week and, with proper amendments, how they are going to protect communities and their representative organizations.

I think it is important to note what will happen if this type of anti-SLAPP legislation is not enacted. If we do not enact this bill, activists and community members will continue to be silenced; wealthy individuals and corporations will increasingly be able to quash opposition; our legal system will continue to be tied up by meaningless litigation; and it will continue to undermine the democratic process which we should be moving mountains to protect.

I would like to take a few minutes to give you an example of a personal experience that I went through in the former city of Stoney Creek, which is now part of greater Hamilton. I was on city council at the time, and there was a landfill that was being proposed by a company, Philip Environmental. They went through the EA process. They actually had a community liaison committee appointed. They were going to put in an on-site leachate treatment plant. All these things were going to happen. Well, Speaker, the EA process was violated, the government didn't step in, they didn't build the treatment plant, and there were problems on the land—underground water and things like this.

We were intimidated. They tried to intimidate the council. They threatened people with lawsuits if they didn't agree to pass the project through our council. I went through a lot of that, and it was amazing. They would enlist the papers. They would pay for big ads. They would say that we were threatening people's jobs by not putting this landfill in.

Speaker, it was the worst place in Ontario to put a landfill—it was supposed to be a non-hazardous landfill, I might add: above a city, on fractured bedrock, a geological nightmare. They did that, and they went ahead with it. MOE did nothing. They were intimidated by this company. Inspectors would show up at times that didn't matter. Even after the landfill was built and they were trucking things in there, they said that they were monitoring the situation. Speaker, they'd monitor one truck out of every thousand.

What happened with this supposed-to-be-non-hazardous landfill? About five years into it, they got caught bringing stuff up from Michigan that Michigan state wouldn't even accept—and they take all the garbage from Toronto, by the way, or used to. They would not accept this hazardous material that went into that landfill above Hamilton, on fractured bedrock—tonnes and tonnes of hazardous material that's not supposed to be in there. Their answer was, "Well, we can't dig it up now." They got big bucks for that. They got fined, a little slap on the hand, and that stuff is still there.

1600

Now, Speaker, they're building houses around there. A new survey is going in right beside it. I'll bet the owners don't know anything about the landfill. I'm sure they don't.

I saw this develop over many years. So why am I bringing this up? Because companies with big bucks—and also, one of their former employees they served with a summons at a wedding in Las Vegas. A big guy came

up and threw it right on the head table of the wedding. That's the kind of thing they did.

They were trying to get certain councillors on board to support it, and they got what they wanted. The vote was 5 to 4. It was the first time in Ontario's history that four councillors appealed to the government in Toronto. The mayor was going to fire us all because we appealed to them to have another look at this, because the four councillors with a conscience asked this government to look at it. They were going to come after us and kick us out of office and fine us and do all these things, which never happened. It was another intimidation thing.

It was amazing. You could write a book about what happened. Talk about small-town—who's that lady in the States? Erin—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Brockovich.

Mr. Paul Miller: Brockovich. This would have been perfect for her.

We lived it in Stoney Creek. I saw all this; it happened.

Then, they sold the company. They got into some problems, as you know, and then they sold it to another company, and they went about their business.

They had a limit. The EAA put a limit on how high you could build the piles of nonhazardous waste. Now they've applied to build it a metre and a half higher, so that's roughly 11 feet higher. We couldn't see it from the road. When you drive up there, you can see these polluted piles of fill that are in there now. It's lovely for the landscape, up on the mountain.

It's about money. It's about intimidation. It's about leading the public down the path, scaring them. Anyone with a conscience has to run away because they're going to face a big lawsuit or they're going to be sued or intimidated or threatened. This is what happens.

This type of legislation should have been there a long time ago. If it had been in place during those times, they wouldn't have gotten away with half the stuff they got away with.

My biggest problem with the whole thing was the lack of involvement of the MOE and the lack of inspectors, who turned their back on some of the stuff that was going on. They didn't enforce the laws of this province. The problem is, Speaker, we can do anything we want in this chamber to make laws, but if they're not enforced and people haven't got the willpower to enforce them and actually go after these polluters or these people who are doing the wrong thing, then they're not worth the paper they're written on.

Over the last 40 years, I've seen so of much of it: pollution, things dumped into Hamilton bay, stuff that should have never gone in there. Now they're spending hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up Randle Reef, because it was a hot spot in the Great Lakes. I have seen hundreds of things go on like this. What did we do about it?

You wonder why there's pollution. You wonder why people are having what they call cancer clusters and why people are dying from the air, the water, the food we eat.

Well, we let this go on too long, by allowing money to talk and the truth to walk. It's got to end, and it's got to end now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments or questions?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, let me start off by saying that I appreciate what the member had to say. I do not agree with everything that he said, but I'm pleased that both he and the Conservative Party, at least to this date, have indicated that they will be supporting this bill.

When all is said and done, we are only the second province that would pass a bill like this. There's one in Quebec, but they've got a slightly different legal system. We're the first common-law province to have this kind of a bill. There was a similar kind of bill in British Columbia a number of years ago, but that was taken off the books.

Speaker, in our system, fortunately or unfortunately, anyone can take a court action against anybody whenever they want. The real proof comes with whether or not they can prove what they're actually alleging in a court action. That's the way our system has worked, and generally speaking, it has worked well. I think we can be very proud of the system of justice that we have here in the province of Ontario.

What this bill, in effect, does is, if in one of those situations where someone is being sued for making an expression on a public interest issue—that individual that is being sued can take this before a judge. Within 60 days, that judge has to review the situation and determine whether or not it is purely an expression of public interest, and if that is so, then the case can be dismissed. That is a dramatic difference from the way the law stands with respect to most other civil lawsuits right now, Speaker.

We are prepared to look at some of the amendments that he is suggesting to make the law even better. We want to make sure that there's a balance there, because I realize full well that sometimes the plaintiffs are rich and powerful interests etc. and the defendants are not. They are, in most cases, in a lesser position. That's precisely why we brought this forward: so there can be a free, public and open expression on those issues of public interest in the province of Ontario. That's why this bill is here, and that's why I urge you to pass it as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. I should note that the Madam Speaker whom I refer to is our critic on this issue and has indicated that we would be supportive. The real issue here is that doing the right thing in this case is the right politics and the right policy.

I commend the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for bringing some reasonable comments with respect to his experiences. He referred to the dump.

I want to also recognize that we are in support of this. We'd like to see it go to committee. Having access to resolving disputes is important. In that context, I want to

point out that more recently the Minister of the Environment, in my riding of Durham, has ruled against the decision that was made just recently in the shadow of Christmas and the holiday season. Mr. Bradley, the Minister of the Environment, has rejected a request for a full-scale environmental assessment on what is referred to as a mega transformer project in my riding. There has been a report done by the University of Guelph, the proponents there from Guelph university, a group called 360. Dr. Jana Levison, Dr. Beth Parker and Professor John Cherry of the University of Guelph stated in the report:

“It is our expert opinion”—and I’m quoting here—“that insufficient hydrogeological study has been carried out to make fulsome decisions regarding site selection for the proposed Clarington transformer station.”

This is another case where these volunteers—and I want to commend them, from the Enniskillen Environmental Association: Clint Cole, Doug Taylor, Stan Kuzma, Jim Sullivan and others. They have been here to Queen’s Park. They’ve met with, they’ve been reasonable, they’ve not politicized this issue. I claim here, this place, right now—this is another example of being slapped into place. Hydro One has basically bullied their way into this thing and tried to approve a minor project, which is now a major project, under the guise of a partial, a small, EA. This is a mistake. It’s another example of the government using its brute force to overcome the influence of constituents in my riding of Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments or questions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It’s a pleasure to rise today. It’s a pleasure to be back in the House. It feels like the first day back after a break—going back to school the first day. It’s a pleasure, and it’s great to see all of you here today.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek spoke with great passion about the importance of public participation. At the heart of this legislation, that’s its goal. I think that as legislators, one of the most important things we can do is encourage people to participate in their democracies. If we can get people to get out of their homes and to speak out on issues that matter to them in their communities, whether it’s developments, whether it’s environmental issues, whatever the issue may be, whatever the concern may be, if we can do whatever we can to make sure people are not deterred from voicing their concern, we’re doing something right. If we can encourage people to voice their dissent, which in my opinion is the hallmark of democracy—the ability to say, “I don’t agree with what’s going on.” If we can do something to bolster that, then we’re doing something right.

In this piece of legislation, the key component is the ability to assess whether or not the lawsuit is simply being used as a strategic lawsuit to discourage public participation. If there are those indicia that this is simply a strategic lawsuit, then there is a fast-track mechanism to get rid of the application. That’s a positive sign. It’s something that we’ve asked for as the NDP. We’ve

called for anti-SLAPP legislation for years. I’m glad to see that it’s finally made it to the House. I’m looking forward to seeing it passed.

Most importantly, there are many people who are deterred not only by the lawsuit but by the threat of a lawsuit. So what we can do now to make sure the climate is set, that people in this province don’t have to fear for participating—we have done a great step for democracy.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It’s my pleasure to rise in the House today to address Bill 83. Like the other members have said, it is good to be back in the House and to be presented with a bill such as this, which is about giving people a voice, and to speak out and to not fear doing so, particularly when the matter represents a broad public interest.

I noted the member opposite talking about environmental interests and those things that touch all of us. I know that—as a province, we dwell on the Great Lakes, and those types of environmental issues are so important to our sustainability here in this community.

I know for my community of Scarborough–Guildwood, it is a very important aspect, ensuring that, when there is a legitimate case to be brought forward, there isn’t that fear of being intimidated or silenced in any way, but rather that the law is protecting that voice and ensuring that there is an opportunity to bring forward those ideas and suggestions. So I absolutely agree with the Attorney General when he says we have a very strong legal system here in Ontario, and this bill is looking to strengthen that already strong legal system.

I too am looking forward to this bill passing and moving forward and ensuring that the diligence that has been placed in preparing this bill is brought to our benefit. I was very pleased to see the broad stakeholder consultation. The inviting in of those expert opinions is also part of that due diligence, and it is ensuring that, as we do think about adjusting this law, we’ve thought through its impact on those stakeholders and ensuring that it represents the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. With all due respect, I appreciate all the speakers who spoke to my presentation. However, I couldn’t disagree with the Attorney General more about how wonderful the laws are in Ontario. Some of the environmental laws in the EA process are like Swiss cheese; there are so many ins and outs that companies can use to get around the process.

When he says that everything is hunky-dory, it’s not, and that’s why we’re here. If everything was great and we had such a great judicial system, we wouldn’t be here. They wouldn’t need legislators. Legislation continually changes, from decade to decade. The environment changes; people change; requirements change. Amend-

ments change the laws; accountability changes. So for him to say that everything's fine—it's not.

We certainly have to go about the proper procedures to improve our legislative ability, improve the laws and the environmental laws and the judicial system. And we have several lawyers in here. If the system was perfect, we wouldn't need lawyers. We would just follow the directions of the regulations. Lawyers are there because there's always interpretation. There are always things that change. There are always challenges. And that's what the judicial system is all about, a healthy judicial system. That's why we have lawyers, so they can challenge decisions that were made that may be outdated.

Look at the laws of the G20. We had laws that were in place 100 years ago, and they got challenged. It took 100 years and something serious to happen before they changed. So, no, the judicial system isn't perfect. It's constantly changing, constantly evolving with time. And we have to put the energy in and do the right thing in this Legislature to improve the lives of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me. First of all, happy new year to you and to all the members. It's great to be back at the Legislature after, obviously, a busy two months in our respective communities working on issues that are very important to our communities.

Speaker, I am more than excited to speak about Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act. The reason for my excitement is that it was in October 2012 that I had the honour of introducing Bill 132, which actually had the same title, the Protection of Public Participation Act. I'm very happy to see that that bill, my private member's bill, Bill 132, has been, in large extent, adopted by the government and now is in the form of Bill 83.

I have been involved in this issue around SLAPP, or anti-SLAPP—strategic litigation against public participation—for some time because of some of the issues that I saw in my community as to the nature of public participation or the steps that different groups may have taken to undermine public participation, especially those from citizens and community groups. It was my work, along with my community, that allowed me to learn more about this issue and in fact inspired me to speak about this issue in the last provincial election in 2011, which I followed up with by making a specific commitment to my constituents in Ottawa Centre, to my community, that if re-elected I would introduce an anti-SLAPP bill in the Ontario Legislature.

I'm very happy; it was a lot of work, over a year, to consult stakeholders. I worked with a lot of environmental groups, and I'm going to mention a few in a moment. I talked to my community to understand their concerns, and, of course, studied in depth and analyzed the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel that the government had created, looked at their recommendations, and then drafted a bill that was Bill 132, which received broad support from a lot of our stakeholders, from community groups and from environmental partners.

In that respect, I want to start by recognizing some of my community members who worked with me and inspired me to get this bill done, and of course some of the environmental NGOs as well. The first person from whom I learned about this issue was a gentleman by the name of Albert Galpin. Albert is a constituent of mine and has become a friend now, who was the subject of a SLAPP lawsuit. He did something that we would consider all our citizens to do, and that is to speak up about the community.

In his instance, what he did essentially was to remind the federal government about a guideline, a policy they had as to the location of parole offices around schools. The federal government, through Corrections Canada, had a policy that parole offices have to be a certain distance from schools. In my community in Ottawa Centre, in the downtown, that was not the case. I think it was in the radius of five kilometres, the parole office from a school.

He basically started rallying the community that this should not be the case, that the federal government should respect its own policy and guidelines. He obviously advocated to the federal government, to Corrections Canada, to follow its policy. After a couple of years of hard work and lots of petitions and whatnot, he was able to convince Corrections Canada that they actually were in violation of their own guideline, and they finally announced that they were going to move.

Everything is fine up to now, because the system worked the way it should be working. However, unfortunately, where the SLAPP came into play is that the landlord where the parole office was located decided to sue Mr. Galpin, my constituent, for some sort of a tort, essentially arguing that he, through his public advocacy as a citizen, forced the government to break the lease agreement. That was totally uncalled for. It was a strategic litigation against somebody who was participating as the public, exercising his democratic right, making sure the government follows its own rules and procedures.

1620

It took Mr. Galpin a couple of years to fight off the legal case. He won. Thankfully, he won. But it took him a long period of time to get there, because there is not something like anti-SLAPP legislation, like the one here before us. So, in that particular case, there was no 60-day hearing as being required or asked for if this bill becomes law—and not to mention the cost. I believe his expenses were in excess of \$50,000 to be able to fight that case.

So it was Albert who brought this matter to me, and I want to thank him for his advocacy. Because of his work, not only was I able to bring my private member's bill but then convince the government to bring a government bill, and I think that speaks to our public, our citizens, really sort of driving public policy.

I also wanted to thank the Hintonburg Community Association, that is located in my community of Ottawa Centre, for their hard work and advocacy on this matter and being a huge supporter of mine in terms of bringing

this matter forward. Jeff Leiper, who was the president of the association then, spoke in favour of my bill. In fact, Hintonburg Community Association also presented to the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel that our government had created.

I'd also like to thank Don Stewart, who is part of the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods, for his good work on this particular issue and his support to me in making this happen.

Lastly, Speaker, the two people—three people, in fact; sorry—who I worked very closely with in drafting the bill, in all the research that was done: One is Ramani Nadarajah from the Canadian Environmental Law Association—I want to thank her—and Hugh Wilkins of Ecojustice, for their advocacy and good, sound advice to me as I was drafting this bill. I want to also thank my friend Will Amos, who is the executive director of the University of Ottawa and Ecojustice law clinic at the University of Ottawa law school, for his very good advice, and also Geoff Turner, who was then my legislative assistant, for his number of hours—umpteen hours—of work on this particular bill.

I also note, Speaker, that there are some other stakeholders here in the House today from Greenpeace and the legal community. I want to recognize Shane Moffatt, Maggie Bergamo, Amanda Gomm, Richard Brooks, Alex Speers-Roesch and Mary Ambrose in support of this bill. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for your advocacy for this very important bill.

Speaker, I think we have heard from other members, and I'm very happy to hear that everyone is supportive of this particular bill, because, we, I think, all recognize that we need to provide protection to citizens and community groups who will advocate on matters of public interest and offer relief from meritless lawsuits that aim to keep them quiet or deter others from speaking out.

I gave you one particular example of a constituent of mine, and there are many, many more where community groups, because they care about their community, because they care about their environment, take up causes as citizens. We should have a system in place, Speaker, that does not penalize them for being good citizens. This is exactly what this bill does. It ensures that we are creating a level playing field in terms of community groups being able to speak on issues that are of public interest. Without their voices, we would not have good decision-making, and it's important that their point of view is always heard. If they get involved and bogged down in legal cases—I think we all know of many, many examples of community groups, citizens doing bake sales. I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of muffins it takes in order to really raise the necessary funds to be able to defend yourself from a meritless lawsuit like a SLAPP. And that is counterproductive, and that's not what a community group should go through.

Speaker, I think others have spoken that SLAPPs are a serious threat to public participation, open debate and community advocacy or action on such things as speaking at public meetings, participating in tribunal hearings,

engaging in public campaigns, contacting the media, reporting environmental violations or lodging complaints with the government. We need to put in place a system like that outlined in Bill 83, which I fully support and endorse, that will allow for frivolous anti-SLAPP cases to be dealt with in an expeditious manner.

We're not taking away the right for somebody to file a lawsuit; anybody has the right to file a lawsuit. Of course, there need to be checks and balances as to the purpose behind the lawsuits. Of course, we've got in our laws and our rules of civil procedure rules around frivolous or vexatious claims. But for all those claims to be fully heard takes a long time. In the case of my constituent, for example, it was almost a two-year period before the suit was found to be of no merit. Having something in place like that outlined in Bill 83, a process that could be heard within the first 60 days, allows a great relief for community groups which may be facing a SLAPP, or a strategic lawsuit. That's why I think it's important that we have this law in place in Ontario.

If the court finds that it's not a strategic lawsuit, then the case continues on. You're not taking away the right of an entity, of a corporation, of an organization to bring lawsuits, but we want to make sure that citizens and community groups are not being penalized for speaking on issues of public interest. In a democracy, we are stronger as a community if public voices are heard and they are taken into consideration.

One of the things that I have seen in my community is issues around the OMB, the Ontario Municipal Board. Communities, of course, rightfully have views as to what the character of their neighbourhoods should look like. They engage very actively in the process, be it the municipal level around the Planning Act. If they find that their concerns were not met by municipalities, they have the option to go to the OMB, or a developer has the option to go to the OMB. We, again, do not want to run into situations where a community group is being stopped through a litigation chill. That, again, is counterproductive. A law like this will ensure that our legal system is not bogged down in frivolous or vexatious lawsuits that are just being brought forward to quieten down public voices, but in fact the courts are being used for their rightful purpose, and that is to deal with issues that are important and are of a contentious nature.

Speaker, I'm not going to take too long—I've almost taken all my time—except to say that I am more than excited, as I mentioned earlier, that this Bill 83 is here as a government bill. It's very similar to what I had tabled under Bill 132, which very closely followed the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel's recommendations. I want to thank all the three panel members for their hard work. I think this is a step in the right direction. It is going to result in a stronger democracy in Ontario; it is going to result in strengthened participation by citizens and by community groups in matters of public interest, which is, I think, paramount in order to ensure that we are making good decisions not only at the provincial level, but at the federal and municipal levels as well.

I ask all members to please support this bill. I think the sooner we pass this into law, the better we are going to be as a province, as a society. I urge members: Let's not take too much time debating—and debate is important on the bill. Let's get the good ideas together, let's take it to committee, let's hear from community groups, let's hear from our environmental partners, and let's make this bill even stronger and bring it back to the House and pass it into law.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I will be speaking very shortly, in fact next, for 20 minutes on this. While I note the importance of bringing forward and debating this particular piece of legislation, I would say at this point rather than in my 20-minute speech that another day has passed that this government has failed to bring forward a jobs plan to get the nearly 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job back to work. Yes, Bill 83 is important, but we've been waiting for that jobs plan to come forward for more than a year now and can only conclude that the government has no plan and no idea how to get the economy moving again and, quite frankly, is out of gas.

With that said, I want to make it abundantly clear that the Ontario PC caucus stands behind the rights of individuals to express their opinions, especially on matters of public interest. I do look forward, in another couple of minutes, to speaking for 20 minutes on this.

One thing I will be bringing forward during my speech is a letter that all MPPs received today from Ms. Esther Wrightman. It was part of the speech that I would be bringing. We have somebody who is in another lawsuit that was launched by a wind turbine developer against a resident of Haldimand county in order to have the video of the destruction of a bald eagle's nest in a planned location for a wind turbine pulled off the Internet. I'm going to spend about 20 minutes talking about that, and about five minutes specifically on where the SLAPP lawsuit would have helped and will help this particular woman.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad we're back here and doing the work of the people that we represent in our constituency office, because it's very important. I know when I was back in the constituency office, many people were talking about the things that they wanted to see, the priorities they want to see, at Queen's Park. Of course, one of them that the member mentioned was a jobs strategy.

In my riding, as we talked about this morning in question period, just last Wednesday—almost a week ago—we had another manufacturer in London close its doors and move out of London. That means 70 people are going to be without a job. It just feels like hit after hit that London has been taking, with this job loss and

suffering in this economy. We really need to have a strong jobs plan that we can get behind, like incentivizing employers to stay in Ontario, grow their business and bring new business to Ontario, and diverse business: manufacturers, technology, food processors.

That was what I was hearing when I was back in the constituency office. People wanted that to be brought to the forefront and for us to speak about it in the Legislature and bring that as a priority to this government.

But today we're talking about the SLAPP legislation. We have the leisure of being members of provincial Parliament and speaking freely in this Legislature, in most cases, free of a lawsuit, of litigation by members, or perhaps even organizations too. But we still always remember that freedom of speech is one of the principles that we have in Canada, so this SLAPP legislation is important and I hope that we can move that forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm very pleased today to stand up and speak in support of Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act. As my colleague from London just mentioned, it's great to be back. It was good to be back in our constituencies and talking to people about what's important to them.

A bill like this is important to them. I want to congratulate the minister, my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre, on putting forward the anti-SLAPP bill originally as a piece of private member's legislation. I know it's something that he worked very hard on, and now he sees this reflected in the legislation.

I'd also like to congratulate him on putting forward an increase to the minimum wage here in Ontario, something which I'm sure all parties are going to speak to at some point. I'm very pleased that we've proposed to tie that to the consumer price index.

The bill would provide protection to those individuals in our communities who are putting forward ideas in the public interest, sometimes ideas that are critical of other parties—large corporations that file lawsuits against them to prevent them from speaking out. This is a very important thing in our democratically organized society: that people be able to speak out on matters that are important to them and key to the public interest.

The bill would allow for a person being sued, the defendant in a lawsuit, who believes that he or she is being sued for expression on a matter of public interest, to have the lawsuit reviewed by a court within 60 days of filing a motion to dismiss this case. This is very important as access to justice should be quick.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm pleased to bring some comment to the comments that were made by our member from Ottawa Centre on Bill 83.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, for probably two months now, since the Legislature was sitting, I have been out in the community of Prince Edward—Hastings, 16 different municipalities; I've spent time in Niagara

Falls, I've spent time in Thornhill; I've spent time, in my critic's portfolio, in Markham and Richmond Hill and Brampton and Scarborough and Etobicoke, and I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that I heard maybe once in two months somebody ask me about that SLAPP legislation going through at Queen's Park.

People aren't talking about the SLAPP legislation. The only people who want to talk about this are those on the government side because they don't want to talk about the things that people really want to talk about in these various communities and ridings that I mentioned across Ontario, and those are the lack of jobs; the soaring hydro rates; the over-regulation, where our businesses are moving outside of Ontario to other jurisdictions because it's easier for them to do business and grow jobs there; and increased taxation. Those are the items people want to talk about in Ontario, but these guys would rather spend time here—two or three hours this afternoon—talking about SLAPP legislation.

I can tell you, there are probably about 12 and a half million Ontarians who don't have a clue what SLAPP is. But these guys want to talk about it here. It's not a priority for the people of Ontario. That's why they want to talk about it, because they have no plan when it comes to the priorities of Ontarians. We need to create good jobs, we need to get the electricity rates and our energy rates under control, we need to deal with over-regulation, we need to deal with high taxes—we need to support the Million Jobs Act that was presented by our leader this afternoon, not waste our time talking about this legislation here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Labour has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Nipissing, London-Fanshawe, Ottawa South and Prince Edward-Hastings for their comments.

It's hard to decipher sometimes, listening to the Conservatives and the NDP, as to who is who, because they are sharing the same talking points. It's unfortunate that this House, in their view, should not show leadership on issues that are important to Ontario.

I think what's even more disappointing is to see the NDP not talking about the environment at all. They are no longer interested in building public transit, something my community in Ottawa Centre cares about. They are more interested in subsidizing car drivers, ensuring that it's cheaper and easier to have more cars on the road than good public transit.

I think the environmental NGOs who are in the Legislature today are even more disappointed to hear from them that they are not focusing on a bill like anti-SLAPP legislation, which will allow for stronger, more active participation by our communities and our community groups on issues that are important to them, and that is a cleaner environment, sustainable societies and a growing economy.

1640

That's why this bill is very important, because when our communities are stronger, our province is stronger,

and one of the best ways to ensure that our communities are stronger is by making sure that there is healthy public debate taking place, that we don't have forces at play using the legal system, the court system that would take that away from our communities.

What this bill does is ensure that we are levelling the playing field, so to speak, in terms of the power imbalance that may exist between strong corporate entities and our community groups. Again, I encourage all members to vote for this bill as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We wish the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you.

I rise today to speak to Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act. As I stated earlier, I want to make it abundantly clear that the Ontario PC caucus stands behind the rights of individuals to express their opinions, especially on matters of public interest.

How does this bill do that? Bill 83 looks to amend the Courts of Justice Act to create a process to determine if a lawsuit is a SLAPP—that's a strategic lawsuit against public participation—and to dismiss it accordingly. A SLAPP is a lawsuit that is pursued for the sole purpose of silencing or punishing those with an opposing viewpoint. This effect is also sometimes referred to as "litigation chill."

Part of what defines a SLAPP is the fact that it is a meritless case and is intended more to intimidate or punish the defendant rather than seek justice for a wrong suffered by the plaintiff. Typically, SLAPPs are withdrawn shortly before going to trial. However, by this time, they have served their intended purpose as they have forced the defendant to go through an extended period of duress, and often at great financial cost.

Bill 83 establishes a new legal procedure that can be used if someone is sued for voicing their opinions on matters of public interest. If enacted, Bill 83 would allow the defendant in this situation to move a motion that would allow them the chance to prove to a judge that the legal proceeding brought against them arises from a communication they made regarding the public interest. If the defendant does prove this, then the judge summarily dismisses the action if the plaintiff cannot satisfy a three-part test. The onus is on the plaintiff to show: (1) that the proceeding has sustained merit; (2) the lack of a valid defence on the part of the defendant; and (3) that the harm is sufficiently serious enough to outweigh the public interest in protecting the expression. It's complicated, but these are the legal technicalities.

So what is the argument, if any, against this? Critics of this bill—and there aren't many—point to this three-part test as being too onerous on the plaintiff. They charge that the plaintiff is put at a disadvantage because the test is applied without the benefit of normal court procedure, without full documentary production, examinations for discovery or oral evidence. They also claim it will be nearly impossible for a judge to decide on a summary basis whether a claimant has substantial merit, whether the defendant lacks a valid defence and, finally, what the public interest is in any given dispute.

I'm going to get to that example of the wind turbine video very shortly.

The critics will also claim that this bill will give the defendant, in an ironic twist, the ability to bully the plaintiff. While the test is onerous on the plaintiff and may restrict access to the courts, it's my view—it's our view, Speaker—that this legislation does it in a justifiable manner. Court actions without merit are quite simply an abuse of process and thus an abuse of resources, which are funded by the taxpayers of Ontario. Frivolous lawsuits are detrimental to the delivery of justice on a grand scale and must be guarded against. In our court system, time is money, and that's a very important consideration.

If the judge is then satisfied that the three-part test is met, the legal proceeding would be dismissed, as it would, in effect, be determined a SLAPP. However, if the judge was not satisfied, the legal proceeding would proceed. The judge would also be able to award compensation regarding costs on the motion if they determine it appropriate. If the judge dismisses the legal proceeding due to the motion and finds that the suing party brought the procedure in bad faith, the judge may award the defendant damages, as the judge considers appropriate. If the suing party has proceedings before a tribunal, the defendant who has moved a motion under this new Bill 83 may also supply a copy of the motion that was filed with the court to the tribunal, and the tribunal proceeding shall be stayed until the motion is dealt with in court.

Bill 83 also places a 60-day timeline on the hearing of the motion so that the matter may be dealt with in a timely manner. This is a key factor in limiting SLAPPs' negative effect on the court system. It is also important for countering the effect of potentially having tribunal proceedings stayed while the motion is before the courts.

The bill also amends the Libel and Slander Act to establish that the current privileges regarding oral or written communications possessed by individuals who have a direct interest in a matter of public interest are also extended to media representations or communications of said individuals or oral or written communication. Again, Speaker, it's awfully complicated, but basically right now if someone has a direct interest in a matter of public interest, they can discuss it and be fairly protected from legal action. However, if a reporter or someone else were to write about what the person said and publish it, then they would be susceptible to legal action because they could be seen as not having a direct interest in the matter. Bill 83 extends protections to

include individuals and reporters recounting or repeating any discussions on the matter.

The bill also amends the Statutory Powers Procedure Act to provide that submissions for costs shall be made in writing. The reality is that while these SLAPPs, as they are known, are relatively rare, when they do occur, they can quite simply ruin people's lives. The Ontario PC caucus does not think it is appropriate for residents to fear having a voice in the growth of their communities. Moreover, these SLAPPs are, by definition, unfounded and stand little chance of ever succeeding, so they needlessly bog down Ontario's court system. Of course, the greater the courts' backlog, the greater costs we have to our court system. That's a critical point, in my view, when we have a government that's running a \$9-billion-plus deficit forecasted by the government themselves to hit \$11.7 billion this year. They continue to overspend, it appears, with reckless abandon. We need to be looking at every area of government in order to find areas where we can be more efficient and reduce costs, and Bill 83 should be no exception.

It's obvious that the government is not doing enough to look to reduce costs. The \$11.7-billion deficit they talk about is a great example. They talk about a legislated wage freeze, but they never implemented it. They put in the budget that they would save \$6 billion by 2017-18 in order to balance the budget. That hasn't materialized, yet they still say they're going to balance. They have talked about a review of agencies, boards and commissions which has not happened. I can tell you that Bill 83, the bill we're speaking about today, is a drop in the bucket when it comes to the bold action that we need to see to rein in spending in Ontario.

1650

Bill 83 is a good step toward addressing the issue of costly court backlogs. For these reasons that I've outlined, I can tell you that I will be voting in favour of the legislation on second reading.

I'd like to go back and talk about some of the issues that led to this piece of legislation coming forward. This bill follows a 2010 report to the Attorney General from the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. The panel was chaired by Dean Mayo Moran of the faculty of law, University of Toronto, and was composed of Peter Downard, a partner at Fasken Martineau law firm; and Brian MacLeod Rogers, a Toronto media lawyer. The panel was created to advise the Attorney General on how the Ontario justice system could prevent the misuse of the courts and other agencies by SLAPP cases while, at the same time, preserving the appropriate recourse for those who are caused harm by the expressions of another. We're speaking about libel and slander here.

Bill 83 is based on "98%" of the 2010 report. The only aspect of the report that was not included in Bill 83 is a section of the report which recommends automatic cost awards and payments upon resolution of a motion under the bill. Ministry officials stated during a technical briefing that stakeholders were hesitant to include this section as it tampered with already well-established cost-

ing and payment methods within Ontario's legal system. SLAPPs are rare, but, due to a select few high-profile cases, have garnered significant public attention, especially lately.

Three potential examples of SLAPPs in Ontario are: (1) the Big Bay Point development near Barrie, (2) an Ontario mayor who sued three opponents three weeks before election day and (3) another Ontario mayor who sued critics. The Big Bay Point case in particular was cited as a driving force behind the anti-SLAPP efforts.

More recently, another lawsuit was launched by a wind turbine developer against a resident of Haldimand county in order to have video of the destruction of a bald eagle's nest in the planned location for a wind turbine pulled off the Internet. You'll remember that. The Ministry of the Environment allowed a wind turbine company to go in and cut down a tree with a bald eagle's nest in it. It was done over the Christmas holidays, I'm sure with the hopes that nobody would ever see this happen, but the vigilant homeowners in the nearby area captured it on video, and there was a request for the wind turbine video to be pulled off the Internet.

Only this morning, all MPPs received a letter from Esther Wrightman. I've got seven minutes left; I'll read you a few pages of her letter, then. I won't read it all. It's a letter to the Attorney General and all Ontario MPPs:

"Dear Mr. Gerretsen and all Ontario MPPs,

"I've been following Bill 83, the 'Protection of Public Participation Act,' as it makes its way through the legislative process, and today I heard that the bill would be discussed this afternoon. I write this in an effort to clarify the need and urgency for this bill for the public."

She goes on to say, a couple of paragraphs later:

"For five years I have been fighting wind developers who are—as I speak—now constructing 100-plus turbines throughout my community. Because of this, I created and operated three websites"—she names them—"Ontario Wind Resistance, Middlesex-Lambton Wind Action Group and Ill Wind Reporting over the years to initiate community and province-wide discussion and education on an issue of extreme importance throughout rural Ontario. I fought every error and every terror these companies committed.

"Perhaps the most stinging terror was publicly exposed in a video I took of a wind energy company destroying an active bald eagle nest in Haldimand county. When I expressed outrage in the form of a parodied image of the company's logo"—she says what she changed it to—from the company's original name; I won't get into that—"the Florida ... company ... demanded I remove the image, the video, and refrain from even using the word 'terror' in connection..."

"And yet, parody and satire are protected by the Copyright Act. And despite the claims in the lawsuit (yes, they sued me when I declined) being manifestly weak—some say, even absurd—I am forced to prove to a court that the wind developer's charges lack merit.

"There are many who say, 'Good for you, Esther, you're doing the right thing!' When I politely inquire if

they would do the same 'right thing,' they quietly back off, saying they have too much to lose by going to court. Besides, they add, they have neither the time or energy or financial resources, to fight.

"I understand their dilemma. They have homes, savings, possessions. At 32 years old, I have little to none of that—with a husband on disability and two kids aged eight and 10, and pinched in my own work from spending endless time fighting the wind companies in a (so far) vain effort to save my home and family farm.

"Even so, this doesn't mean my family's ability to flourish in the future should be crippled by a corporation that has clearly filed this lawsuit to drain my energy, time and life. Despite knowing the plaintiff would get precious little should it prevail in court, I wake up daily with the fear and sting of this looming over my family's life, for years to come. And as Julia Munro"—Speaker, she's speaking about you—"stated during Bill 83's debate, '... justice delayed is justice denied, and it is as much in this context as in any other legal context.'

"I'm not the only one in a legal chokehold of a corporate SLAPP suit. Bluewater, West Grey, Plympton-Wyoming, Wainfleet, Adelaide Metcalfe—all small townships—have been likewise slapped around by threat of either lawsuit or some other legal action by big wind developers. The developers know well the inevitable legal bill would drain township coffers.

"Most of those subjected to this treatment fall silent, right away, regardless of the issue. I've watched it happen even just within the wind energy issue. One can imagine its prevalence when 'little people' like me say 'no' to the guys in the suits and black SUVs...."

At least she didn't say yellow ties.

"When the many conflicting, disagreeable and yes, inconvenient voices of the people fall silent, and the corporate or party line reigns unopposed across the land, you can be sure democracy has been replaced by something else. There are those who argue it has already begun in this province. The Green Energy Act being a case in point—as the voice of the people has been effectively removed from decision-making, leaving us only one option: to protest and speak outside of the government process. If Ontario is going to pass the" Green Energy Act "and similar authoritarian measures, then I ask that this present Legislature have the backbone to pass Bill 83 as a necessary counterweight and precaution."

She ends with, "Even though we might not agree with one another's opinion, and how we express it, we must defend our human right to do so. With that, I ask that you please make the passing of Bill 83 a top priority."

She signs it Esther Wrightman, and her home address and email are here—a very compelling letter from Esther, and quite frankly, the true case for the SLAPP lawsuit. This type of action should concern all of us in the Legislature, especially those on the government side whose green energy subsidies are leading to issues like this one, not to mention the tripling of hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses over the past 10 years.

1700

A November 2013 column published in the Toronto Star noted that more than 150 different organizations, more than 60 municipalities and the Ontario Bar Association have called on us here in the Legislature to pass anti-SLAPP legislation. This is one of those—

Applause.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Sorry you missed the last 19 minutes. You would have heard raving comments about it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm going to read the Hansard.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You'll enjoy it, I guarantee you.

This is one of those rare occasions where all three parties seem to agree that this type of legislation is indeed worthwhile pursuing and worthwhile passing.

Speaker, the right and freedom to voice your opinion, especially when it comes to matters of public interest, is fundamental to our democracy. The use of SLAPPs runs counter to that principle. As I said earlier, I'm pleased to support this legislation upon second reading, and I thank you very much for the 20 minutes you have given me to speak to this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak in the House. I'm quite happy that we're back here at Queen's Park, where we're able to roll up our sleeves and get to work and raise many of the important issues that certainly our constituents have raised with us over the past couple of months while we've been away.

The Legislature here is a very important platform. It's important for a few reasons.

Some of the themes that I heard over the break are the necessity of having affordable hydro—that's a theme and a lot of pressure that I'm receiving from my constituents—as well as the need to have safe and passable highways. That's an issue that I raised while we were away, but I didn't have much success, despite the Minister of Transportation saying that if it continued to be a problem, he would come up to Kenora–Rainy River and meet with the contractor and myself.

We're here to talk about the anti-SLAPP legislation, but I did want to pass along those comments and stress how happy I am that we are back so we can talk about a number of other issues.

As New Democrats, we welcome the introduction of this legislation. It is important to note, as I'm sure has been mentioned by many of my NDP colleagues, that our leader, Andrea Horwath, has introduced anti-SLAPP legislation in this Legislature twice before.

As New Democrats, we are supportive of this bill because it incorporates most of the panel recommendations, but we do look forward to taking the opportunity to strengthen this bill when it goes to committee. We want to hear from a number of stakeholders, too, to make sure it is the best possible piece of legislation that we can come up with.

The bill, however, doesn't reverse the onus of proof. The party that's initiating the suit does not have to prove

that the suit is not being brought forward to silence public participation. So there are a number of things that we will be looking to strengthen in committee.

I thank you for the opportunity to weigh in.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it is actually a pleasure to stand up and to agree with my colleague from Nipissing, particularly on this particular measure. It's said that money doesn't talk, that it screams. That's certainly the case in the event that someone comes home and finds a process server handing them a statement of claim and saying, "You've just been sued because you've objected to" whatever.

The member for Nipissing has rhymed off a number of things that people have written him about. I can tell him a personal story. Back in the 1990s, there was a proposal to implement in Peel schools a scheme from a particularly dubious supplier that would have forced kids to watch commercial television and required the schools to guarantee that 90% of the kids watched it 90% of the time. In fairness, the government of the day did withdraw or back away from that. But in the process of that, I had a website, and I objected to that.

One day the process server showed up. I had a few friends who were lawyers. I showed this to them, and they said, "This is a SLAPP lawsuit. Let us look after this for you." Obviously, this particular prospective vendor never had the backbone to pursue it, because he would have lost in court. Nonetheless, there were a number of others who were similarly harassed. For a lot of them, this was a very traumatic experience, when you get a process server ringing your doorbell in the middle of the night, handing you a statement—a claim—and saying, "Hi, I'm a process server. You've been sued." This bill proposes a made-in-Ontario solution that would allow the courts to quickly identify and to deal with these vexatious actions by the plaintiff, to dismiss them and, frankly, to stick the plaintiffs with the cost.

I think this is a good one, and I think all three parties are on the same page here. I do hope we can get this thing to committee and get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, I just want to be here to thank the member from Nipissing for bringing a voice to his constituents, in this case Esther Wrightman; he was making the point that she should have certain rights, the right of, if you will, freedom of speech. Bill 83, as has been said by all members here, is to do that. It's to dismiss under the three different statutes it amends, the Courts of Justice Act, Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act—all in their own specific way deal with the rights of the person to defend themselves against frivolous and vexatious and intimidating threats of legal action, which was the case in the Big Bay Point marina on Lake Simcoe, as well as Marineland.

This came to my light as well, a perfect example—the Minister of the Environment is here. In my riding, I had the good work done by honest, hard-working constituents

Clint Cole, Doug Taylor and others, a group of people who characterize themselves as the Clarington transformer defendants. This decision was made to not respect the interests of the constituents who had the support—I'm going to read here from STORM, that's Save the Oak Ridges Moraine group. "In conclusion, it is STORM's position that the draft ESR does not adequately reflect the legislative and policy context and imperatives of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act and ORMCP. STORM therefore respectfully requests a Part II order for this undertaking in order for Hydro One to demonstrate legislative compliance." In fact, academics—these aren't politicians—said that incomplete work was done in the review of that process.

I challenge the minister—and under his decision, there's no appeal. This is another case of government, the big-handed government, in the context of this discussion under SLAPP legislation—I'm asking the minister to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I am a strong proponent of this particular bill, as well, and I appreciated the remarks of the member for Nipissing, who I think outlined good reasons for a bill of this kind to be brought forward. We are trying to move legislation as rapidly as possible in a context of unanimity amongst the three parties. Getting this committee, making any amendments or proposing any amendments will be helpful, and then we'll have the legislation in effect.

I think of an individual in my community by the name of Eleanor Lancaster, who ended up in a court case. Eleanor Lancaster ran against me for the Conservative Party in 1977. A marvelous individual, she has been a lifelong, loyal Progressive Conservative over the years. She decided in the last municipal election she would check out where the donations came from, so she registered a complaint with the appropriate people, and it ended up going to court.

Now her problem was, here was a citizen, of her own volition, taking it upon herself to do some investigating in determining whether these contributions were appropriate or not, and she ended up in court. They were trying to get costs against her for doing it. I thought, "How unfortunate." I've met with Eleanor on a couple of occasions. She's a top-notch individual. Her husband, interestingly enough, at one time was on the Ontario Municipal Board; Bud Lancaster was on the Ontario Municipal Board.

It's all in this realm of people being intimidated from taking action they felt in their own heart and their own mind was appropriate. She took this particular action, and she ended up in court, again, having to hire her own lawyer and try to defend herself against those who were trying to assess costs against her.

It's all in the appropriate field. I think the member has had a good speech. The part I heard of it was excellent, and I commend him for it.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nipissing has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to say thank you to the members from Kenora—Rainy River, Mississauga—Streetsville, Durham and the Minister of the Environment for their comments as well.

I wanted to pick up where the member from Mississauga—Streetsville left off when he spoke about the trauma. I can tell you, from the 1990s, after I had sold my company—between then and 2003, when I became mayor of the city of North Bay, I worked as a volunteer at a wonderful organization called the Air Base Property Corp., which took over all the assets of the former Canadian Forces base in North Bay. I served as chairman of that corporation.

I remember coming home one night, and my wife said—she was a little bit shaken up, talking—and she's no wallflower; trust me. She was a little bit shaken up. She said, "There was a man here with papers to serve you." We talked about it a little bit and I told her, "This is from my volunteer work at Air Base Property. It's a hundreds-of-million-dollar organization that is inevitably going to have lawsuits from contractors." So I phoned the process server, who was an elderly gentleman. I said, "Look, why don't you bring your wife from now on when you come to the house? Come over and we'll have coffee and Patty's cheesecake together." That's how we did it, because I knew there were going to be a dozen lawsuits coming. They were all frivolous. None of them ever went anywhere. I never had to spend a second in court, but it was enough that it upset her. She wondered, "Are we going to lose our house over this? You're only volunteering at this job. Why should you stay there?" They were trying to intimidate us by that.

It didn't work. We were able to quite seriously have him, the process server and his wife—they'd pull up in the car. He would phone me in advance and tell me he was coming. I would go home. He'd bring his wife. She and Patty and he and I would sit, the four of us together, and we'd shoot the breeze. He'd hand me the papers. I would assure Patty there was nothing to worry about. But that's how we had to handle it. It was a very traumatic thing—not as much for me because I knew what it was about, but for my wife it was. So this is the kind of SLAPP law that will help families like that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: As the MPP for London West, it's a great pleasure for me to rise today to speak in support of this bill, Bill 83, protection of public participation. I have to say how wonderful it is to see us start a new year with this shared commitment to move ahead on the priorities of the people we represent.

I want to begin by congratulating the government for having taken action on this very important issue. It is something that has been desperately needed in this province for a very long time.

I was listening to CBC Radio last week and I did hear the Attorney General talking about the bill. I was very impressed by his defence of the legislation and the rationale he presented for bringing it forward. Of course,

he didn't mention that the legislation was actually twice introduced by the NDP, by our leader, Andrea Horwath, in the form of a private member's bill as long ago as 2008, or that also it has been more than three years since the government's own panel issued a major report in 2010, urging the adoption of anti-SLAPP legislation.

Nevertheless, despite the passage of time, we're pleased to see this important bill moving forward on the legislative agenda, and that's because truly, as all of us know who are elected to this place, there is nothing more fundamental to democracy than freedom of speech and there are few tools more effective in silencing democracy than strategic lawsuits against public participation, or SLAPPs. To paraphrase a colourful US judge, "Short of a gun to the head, a greater threat to freedom of expression can scarcely be imagined."

What is a SLAPP? The government's 2010 expert panel, chaired by U of T law school's Dean Mayo Moran, defined a SLAPP as follows. It is "a lawsuit initiated against one or more individuals or groups that speak out or take a position on an issue of public interest. SLAPPs use the court system to limit the effectiveness of the opposing party's speech or conduct. SLAPPs can intimidate opponents, deplete their resources, reduce their ability to participate in public affairs and deter others from participating in discussion on matters of public interest."

The sole purpose of a SLAPP is to censor, intimidate and silence critics, usually local residents or activists who are opposed to the actions of a developer or a corporation. The corporation launching the SLAPP does not expect to win. They are not looking for monetary compensation or other legal remedies. No, their intention is tactical. It is to make the defendants pay the legal costs of defending themselves and, in so doing, to wear them down and exhaust them financially and emotionally until they drop their opposition or criticism.

Of course, the other indirect but equally insidious result of a SLAPP is to intimidate others from taking up the fight and to discourage future groups or citizens from intervening or organizing against the plaintiff. In this way, SLAPPs have been called a form of legal bullying.

There have been many, many examples of recent SLAPP lawsuits which confirm and reinforce the need for this legislation, and I'd like to mention a couple of them here now.

There was the Toronto Port Authority case where a community group and seven of its directors were sued for \$850,000 in damages by the port authority because of comments made about the reindustrialization of the Toronto waterfront.

There is the Quebec example of *Noir Canada*, an academic and exhaustively researched book about the impact of the mining industry in Africa. The small, Quebec-based publisher of the book and the three authors were sued by Barrick Gold and Banro for approximately \$11 million. Barrick Gold and Banro stated that the book was libelous and that the defendants orchestrated an international campaign to harm their reputations.

Other cases that have been mentioned by my colleagues already today concerned Geranium Corp. and the proposed Big Bay Point mega-marina and resort in the town of Innisfil on Lake Simcoe—and obviously, the Marineland situation.

I want to quote from an affidavit that was presented to the OMB by one of the defendants in the Geranium Corp. SLAPP. He said:

"I feel threatened, harassed, and intimidated by Geranium's legal claims, and fear exposure to lawsuits and the costs associated with defending them.

"I do not write letters to the town, county, province or local papers in fear of repercussions from the Big Bay Point developers.... From fear of being implicated in a lawsuit myself, I would not write a letter or voice my personal opinions about the project in any way whatsoever.

"I do not have the funds or means to defend myself in a lawsuit, which increases my fear of publicly speaking out as an individual. I would not testify at an OMB hearing with the lawsuits pending and the threat of new legal actions. I would not be able to defend myself financially from such a wealthy developer."

The financial, emotional and even physical stress on a defendant who is served in a SLAPP can be horrendous. Not only do defendants find themselves embroiled in lengthy litigation, but they may experience difficulty keeping their jobs, their family relationships can suffer, they can encounter challenges getting financial credit with a significant legal claim against them, and of course, there is the reputational damage of being involved in a lawsuit.

There is a vital need for this legislation, to protect the rights of citizens to speak out about what they see happening in their communities, to participate in democracy and to raise their concerns. This is particularly important when it comes to environmental issues and development decisions, when citizens can end up challenging some very significant players, some very powerful people. This was noted in a 2008-09 report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, who said, "When the stakes are in the many millions—sometimes billions—of dollars, the resources that developers are prepared to invest to overcome residents' objections far surpass the capacity of most citizens groups, environmental organizations, and even conservation authorities and municipalities."

The possibility that citizens can be charged, that they can be served lawsuits and sued or threatened for speaking out, can have a chilling effect on public participation and public dissent. It can discourage people from engaging in their community by making them fearful that raising objections or expressing opposition can put them at huge legal risk. This has an impact at every level of democratic participation, from writing a letter to the newspaper, to tweeting or posting to Facebook, to attending a rally or protest, to speaking up at a public meeting and to talking to the media.

1720

If we are serious about protecting democracy and about creating conditions where democracy can flourish,

then we have to have legislative protections in place to enable people to speak up, to take a stand on an issue and to try to mobilize their community around an idea or cause. Think of how many of us in this Legislature started that way because we felt so strongly about an issue that we wanted to make a change. And think about how many of us might have been deterred if we knew that powerful corporate interests could take us to court and create huge financial and other challenges by launching a SLAPP.

What does Bill 83 do? First, it allows a person against whom a proceeding is brought to introduce a motion that can result in the proceeding being dismissed by a judge if the person can demonstrate that the proceeding arises from an expression made on a matter of public interest. The legislation also allows the motion to dismiss to be brought at any time and requires that it be heard within 60 days. Appeals to the motion must be heard as soon as possible.

Although New Democrats welcome this legislation, since we did author it initially, there are still some issues we would like to see addressed when the bill passes second reading, which it sounds like it will, and proceeds to committee.

First, Bill 83 does not reverse the onus of proof. The party initiating the SLAPP does not have to prove that the SLAPP is not being launched to silence public participation. The bill does not specify timelines for filing of responding affidavits by the plaintiff or mention anything about the defendant filing additional affidavits. Third, the bill limits a stay of a tribunal proceeding only to tribunals that fall within the Statutory Powers Procedure Act—for example, the OMB.

Aside from these concerns, we are strongly supportive of this legislation and look forward to seeing it improved in committee with input from stakeholders.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to support Bill 83. I listened intently to my colleague from London West and my colleague from Nipissing earlier giving different examples of why this bill is necessary to protect the public, especially those who are strong advocates in terms of democracy. But more important, Madam Speaker, it is to protect the community and individuals who may not be able to come forward to advocate on behalf of the community.

As the bill said, it talks about combatting lawsuits brought solely to silence individuals. I heard the member from London West talking about the issue of bullying. At the end of the day, we don't want to silence individuals who intently try to advocate for their community. At the end of the day, each one of us in this House advocates out in our community. Why should we, as individuals in our community, not be able to speak eloquently on behalf of our community or work with our community?

The other piece of the legislation is, it is a made-in-Ontario bill, meaning that it is a made-in-Ontario solution that will allow courts to quickly identify whether this is a

vexatious lawsuit or it is an unwarranted lawsuit to silence certain critics. At the end of the day, we really need to make sure we differentiate between those who legitimately have a right to be in court and those who are trying to intimidate. We heard from our colleague from Nipissing of some intimidating tactics, such as going to people's homes to try to intimidate.

This is why Bill 83 is necessary, to ensure that citizens of this great province have a legitimate ability to voice their concerns before being taken to task by certain individuals or organizations or big companies.

Madam Speaker, I'm really pleased to hear in this afternoon's debate that many of our members are supportive of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do also want to thank the member from London West, who brings a voice on behalf of her constituents. I should say that I agree—pretty well all members agree—with the general sentiment here of this bill.

I'd like to put a little more attention, a little focus, on one part. It's the amendments to the Courts of Justice Act. Now, it sounds very technical and all that stuff, but it really is quite plain language if you read it:

"Under subsection 137.1(3), a person against whom a proceeding is brought may bring a motion to get the proceeding dismissed on the basis that the proceeding arises from an expression made by the person that relates to a matter of public interest...." This "defines 'expression' for the purposes of" this section I just mentioned. "If the judge hearing the motion is satisfied of this, he or she must dismiss the proceeding"—so it's early dismissal, and that is very important. The person who is being taken to court, if you will, is being intimidated, often so that they will drop their opposition to the issue that's before them.

We, as members here, often see this, dealing with environmental issues. What we're looking for is fairness, and that's the real issue. If it's being flagrantly intervened by a group—and I'm going to say this with all sincerity. In my area and in part of southern Ontario there is a large issue dealing with Line 9, which is the transfer of gas and bitumen across southern Ontario into Montreal to get the western oil to the—now this, quite honestly, is very legal. It's being dealt with by the federal government, but really the voices should be heard, and there's a panel. The federal government has brought together hearings. People will maybe disagree with some of those hearings, but I believe those persons charged with listening to the scientific information should take it seriously and dismiss those who are just being oppositionist to these things. So it's a very good remark—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments? The member for Ottawa-Nepean.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Free speech is basic to our democracy in these days. We know that environmental groups across the country are placed in a position by the

federal government now where they could lose that tax status that they have. That's why David Suzuki left his organization: so that he could continue to speak out for the environment. Individuals who feel strongly about protecting our environment—especially protecting our environment—must have this protection. They need this protection to be able to voice their opinion when you see big oil, big gas, big coal and big many things really dominating our economy.

I really support this bill. I think it's important for Ontario and it's important for individuals who want to help build a stronger environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I want to correct my record: Ottawa–Orléans.

Any further comments? Any further questions or comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I beat John Yakabuski, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, to the stage here.

Again, I want to reiterate my strong support for this. I hear many speeches in this House. I haven't heard any yet that were negative to this legislation, which tells me it's a piece of legislation that should probably proceed now directly to committee and have appropriate input in committee. Then, of course, there's third reading. I can recall, when I was first elected to this House, by the way, that there was no third reading. Third reading was a nod of the head. That's changed, and I understand that, and that's fine. When Mr. Yakabuski's father was sitting on the government benches in that particular case, he would have noted—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It must be nice. I've never been there.

Hon. James J. Bradley: At least one of the Yakabuskis has been on the government benches, and who knows what the future holds anywhere in this province?

Anyway, this particular piece of legislation, I think, is appropriate. One of the concerns I personally have had is that people who want to oppose projects or proposals that are put forward often feel intimidated by the fact that they might be sued.

The difference with these kinds of suits, the so-called SLAPP suits and other suits, is that some suits are pursued for justifiable purposes and they actually intend to proceed with it through the full court proceedings. In this particular case they're often used simply to intimidate people, and people will back off before there's ever a court case. Most of the time, these suits never proceed to court.

I'm saying that we have unanimity in this House. We have a great opportunity to show the public out there how we can work together on a piece of legislation that we all agree upon. I certainly look to my colleagues on the other side of the House to join us in having this go to committee and be appropriately dealt with at that point in time.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleagues the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, the member for Durham, the member for Ottawa–Orléans and the Minister of the Environment for their comments.

There were a couple of points that were made that I think are really key to this debate. The first is around matters of public interest. We need to find ways to enable citizens, residents and community organizations to participate in discussions about issues within their community.

I think of my own community in London West and the actions that citizens have taken to protect environmentally sensitive areas like Sifton Bog, Meadowlily Woods and Reservoir Hill against unfettered development. What would have happened to these citizens and these efforts if SLAPP lawsuits had been launched? We need to enable healthy democracy to flourish and to give voice to citizens to participate.

The other thing I think we need to reinforce to people in Ontario is that anti-SLAPP legislation is really a way to level the playing field. It does not prevent anyone from seeking relief in court for legitimate reasons. What it does is create consequences for organizations or corporations that launch meritless lawsuits for the sole purpose of intimidation.

So I agree with the Minister of the Environment that it is time to move on with this legislation, to get this in place so that we can further the democratic process in this province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Standing order 23 is pretty clear that you cannot impute motive to another member in the House. Further, the parliamentary privileges—if you take a look at page 83, when it speaks to privileges versus contempt, it says, “deliberately publishing a false or misleading report of the proceedings of the House or a committee” could be found to be a contemptuous issue.

I have a letter here dated February 18 from Todd Smith, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, who said that New Democratic members in the House today refused unanimous consent on a bill dealing with recognizing January as the Tamil—you know, a proclamation bill for Tamils in the month of January. That was not the case. We did not say no. We were allowing it to go forward. The member is now sending a letter across this province saying that New Democrats did something that they did not do in the House, and I wish this to be looked into.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. First of all, I don't think it's a point of order, but I certainly will take it under advisement.

Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my honour and privilege to rise today and debate Bill 83, the Protection of Public

Participation Act, 2013. I need to specify the year, because similar bills have been introduced in the past, but for one reason or another we find ourselves still trying to pass this legislation.

Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to thank our critic, the member from York-Simcoe, for an insightful analysis of this piece of legislation. I would also like to thank the member from Dufferin-Caledon for her one-hour speech highlighting three high-profile cases of SLAPPs here in Ontario.

Firstly, people might be wondering, just what is a SLAPP? Well, it stands for "strategic lawsuit against public participation." It's defined as a lawsuit that is pursued for the sole purpose of silencing or punishing those with an opposing viewpoint. The effect that such lawsuits have is often referred to as a litigation chill.

Part of what defines a strategic lawsuit against public participation is the fact that it is a meritless case. The purpose of these lawsuits is to punish or intimidate, not to seek justice for a legitimate grievance.

In most cases, these lawsuits are withdrawn shortly before going to trial. However, by this time, they've already taken a tremendous toll on the defendants of such targeting. These lawsuits cause defendants an undue amount of stress and often great financial costs.

Anti-SLAPP laws are on the books in Quebec, were around briefly in British Columbia and can be found in roughly half of the US states. California is the most commonly cited when discussing such laws. Several high-profile cases in the state have led to an increased focus on these types of suits. In fact, the Kardashians are currently in a legal battle this month, as their lawyer is looking to fend off a lawsuit using California's anti-SLAPP laws.

But it's not only the rich and famous who get targeted by spurious lawsuits. Ontario has had its share of strategic lawsuits against public participation. More often than not, it's the poor or vulnerable who get targeted by those who have the resources to wage court battles to silence their opposition.

Bill 83 is a response to a 2010 report to the Attorney General from the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. The panel was chaired by University of Toronto faculty of law Dean Moran. This was not one of the 36 panels, by the way, that this Premier created within her first nine months on the job. I'm not sure if they still keep stats for that, but that's got to be some kind of record.

However, back on the anti-SLAPP discussion, the anti-SLAPP panel was in fact created to provide advice to the Attorney General on how Ontario's judicial system could prevent the misuse of the courts and other agencies by SLAPP cases while simultaneously preserving the appropriate legal response available to those who are experiencing legitimate cases of libel or even slander.

Essentially, they had to be mindful to find a balance. They had to ensure that they protected those who were being unfairly targeted while allowing legitimate cases, where parties had indeed been caused harm by the words or actions of others, to continue to be heard by the courts.

The panel found that the threat of abusive lawsuits claiming massive damages, especially for defamation, is deterring significant numbers of Ontarians from speaking out on issues of important public interest. The panel called for a test that defendants could use to throw SLAPPs out of court. Technically speaking, Bill 83 would in fact establish a new legal procedure that can be used if someone is being sued for voicing their opinions on public interest.

Again, as I look through my notes here, and we're talking a lot about the anti-SLAPP laws, a lot has been said about this. But I would like to bring to the attention of everyone what our PC Party is proud to say, and that is, we are proud to support this bill. For those on the receiving end of a SLAPP lawsuit, it can feel like David versus Goliath. This is David's sling; it gives power to the little guy who, up until now, had no other option than to fight the lawsuit, costing them time and money.

The PC Party stands firm in the belief that individuals are free to voice their opinions and expressions in the public interest. Our democracy is built upon public engagement. Any effort to silence citizens of this province must not be tolerated.

On behalf of the organizations, it has been stated that if this bill is passed, it will champion the human rights of ordinary Ontarians, allow for robust debate on matters of public interest and save taxpayer money. Speaker, we all know we need to focus and zero in on how we can save the taxpayers' money as opposed to just throwing that taxpayer money to the wind, no pun intended.

Additionally, over 64 municipalities and the Ontario Bar Association have supported anti-SLAPP legislation. I hope that for once, the government side listens to the wishes of municipalities, as they have been ignored by the province on several issues in the last few years—most notably the Green Energy Act, which stripped rural Ontarians of any input in regard to massive industrial wind turbine projects being forced upon their communities, but I'll get back to that in a moment.

1740

What I would like to talk about most importantly here is an example that highlights—a lady by the name of Esther Wrightman, who was targeted by a lawsuit last summer. While many of my fellow members may be familiar with that name, folks at home watching today may need to be reminded of just who this woman is.

She's an anti-wind activist who had vocally criticized wind farm proposals in Middlesex and Lambton counties. As a result of her opposition to wind turbine development in her community, the mother of two is being targeted with a lawsuit from a \$32-billion energy corporation. Bugged down in a court battle, she has had much less time to voice her opposition to turbine developments. NextEra Energy Canada is suing Mrs. Wrightman over altered company logos that appeared online and in videos that were posted to YouTube. Esther, frustrated as her community's opposition to wind turbine development was completely ignored by a provincial government that has long ignored rural Ontario, posted an altered version

of NextEra's logo. The statement of claim from NextEra seeks unspecified damages over "offending material deliberately used to adversely affect NextEra's reputation," after the company had issued a cease-and-desist order to Wrightman.

In a *Sarnia Observer* article written last June, Mrs. Wrightman said that she could be the poster child for Ontario's proposed new law to curb strategic lawsuits launched to silence critics.

Interestingly, the government introduced the Protection of Public Participation Act just weeks after wind farm developer NextEra Energy Canada launched a lawsuit against Wrightman. Will this lawsuit qualify as a SLAPP lawsuit under the new piece of legislation? While we may never find out the answer to that question, the PC Party does feel that Mrs. Wrightman was targeted by a SLAPP lawsuit.

By supporting Bill 83, I just want to send a message to my constituents who are voicing their concerns, whether it's regarding industrial wind turbines or any other matters related to public interests. All of my constituents and all Ontarians must be able to enjoy the freedom to express their opinions without fear.

If you play by the rules, you're not going to be subject to spurious lawsuits. If you are targeted with a baseless lawsuit, there will soon be options to fight back and get these cases out of court.

The reality here is simply this: While strategic lawsuits against public participation are fairly uncommon, when they do come up, they can potentially ruin someone's life. Bill 83 expands the tool kit to our province's judges.

Again, we in the Ontario PC caucus believe in no uncertain terms that it is unacceptable for residents to fear having a voice in their own communities. The ability of our citizens to engage in meaningful debate on matters of public interest is a cornerstone of our democracy, and we must do all we can to protect this essential freedom.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, Speaker, I'm glad to hear the debate that has gone on in the House today. It has been long overdue, to say the least. I don't want to reiterate, but our leader has brought this forward twice before, and it didn't get through. Now, all of a sudden, it has become a priority, and it's getting through. Well that's good, because the people of this province have a right to speak out on events that are taking place in their community, and they certainly have the right to not feel that they can't stand up to major corporations because of the fear of being sued or intimidated or threatened. That has no place in our society. But trust me, over the years, I have seen a lot of that intimidation, and money talks and you know what else goes away.

So the bottom line is, when an individual in a community feels threatened about an environmental situation—and the environment minister can relate to this—whether it's a landfill, whether it's dumping illegal toxins into our lakes and our ponds, they have a right to speak out without the fear of being threatened physically,

threatened with litigation or actually isolated and removed from the process. That's what has happened so many times in our society over the years.

This is a start. I read some recommendations that I would like to see put into this bill because I myself, Speaker, lived through the Taro landfill in Hamilton. I also saw Randle Reef. I've lived through a lot of these situations in heavy industries that have seen many people over the years being squashed when they were doing the right thing. Even my uncle, the former mayor of Hamilton, was a huge environmentalist. At one point, he was even threatened by the Steel Company of Canada of being fired for daring to challenge them on some of the things that were going on. He stood by his guns, so to speak, and they eventually capitulated in their attack and he managed to retain his employment, but of course with an eye being on him all the time. That's unfortunate.

Those days should be gone. People have a right to speak out if they see something that's wrong. I'm glad the government is at least moving in the right direction, and we certainly would support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am really pleased to add my voice in support of Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act.

I've been listening attentively to the debate that has been taking place here this afternoon. I believe that this bill will give a voice to citizens to help them participate in public affairs. As we've heard, it has been presented here in the House by more than one member—certainly by the member from Ottawa Centre, now Minister of Labour, and, as we've heard, also from the member from Hamilton Centre. It is a bill that, having been presented in the House a number of times, has the support of many of our colleagues. Therefore, I would really urge everyone to support it and make it go to committee so that if there are any items that need to be fine-tuned, that can happen as soon as possible.

It is important because, as we all know, our courts are overburdened. Sometimes these strategic lawsuits can take years to get to trial. They cost hundreds of thousands of dollars sometimes, and they also stop the voices that need to be heard in a democratic society. Therefore, I would urge everyone to support the bill. I think that it's well thought out even in the different faces and the questions that are basically asked. There has been extensive consultation on the bill that has taken place throughout the province. I think we're ready to move it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to compliment the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. There's an example of a member who's doing the very best work for his riding, and I commend him for his remarks that are so relevant. I know there have been issues in his riding—that he has been a very strong voice.

That's the point he was making: that these are essential freedoms, as he said in his remarks.

More relevant to my riding of Durham—more recently, the Ministry of Energy approved a solar farm project on 100 acres of class 1 farmland on Shirley Road.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Which is not supposed to happen.

Mr. John O'Toole: This was approved. They engaged the government—under Bill 150, there's no dissent or appeal mechanism. They won the right to appeal to the environmental tribunal, and they were frightened off by the intimidation of this government, under Kathleen Wynne—of the legal fees.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not making this up. I'm trying to represent my constituents. The problem with the Liberals that I've found so far—they are so partisan because they support this bill. I have no faith that this bill will ever see the light of day.

Bill 150 expunged any right of appeal or public input. In this case, it was a solar farm of 100 acres on class 1 farmland. These people did all the right things. They're not political at all; they're just people who are trying to farm to make a living in Ontario today. Then they were bullied out of the right to their day in court because they were going to have to pay the costs for both the proponent and the defence.

1750

I say to you, you say one thing—your actions speak louder than words. Bill 150 is a clear example of a government that has no intention of hearing your concerns. This bill here, until I see it in committee and I see them listen to our recommendations, I have no faith in anything that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, there's a solution to that, Madam Speaker, and that is to let it get to committee. We hear about this bill never coming to fruition, and it's largely because, with so many bills we have before the House, the Conservative caucus gets up and filibusters and prevents the bill from proceeding, even when there is agreement.

I can understand it when there is a matter of contention; that makes all kinds of sense. I've seen some of the members opposite make some compelling arguments against government bills which are of contention and with which they disagree, and that's quite legitimate in debate. Here we have an example of a bill that everybody agrees with in principle, and we're at second reading, which is in principle. It seems to me, from the speeches I've already heard from members of the Conservative caucus, the official opposition, that they are in favour. Therefore, as members of the New Democratic Party and members of the government have said, why don't we get

this bill to committee? It could actually go to committee as a result of the debate today.

It could go to committee, and ultimately a final determination could be made. It allows the opportunity to make amendments in committee. We are always interested in hearing from, first of all, the public, and second, all members of the Legislature of all the political parties, on amendments which could improve or strengthen the bill. But we cannot do this if, on every piece of legislation, we see Conservative members getting up to continue to speak to slow down the process on bills where there is agreement.

I reiterate: Where there is not agreement, I fully understand the official opposition going through the process they do. We have agreement. The government agrees, the third party agrees, the official opposition agrees. It's time to get this bill to committee. I hope that we have heard the last speaker now and that this bill will go to committee as a result of this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would like to thank the members from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, York South—Weston, the member from Durham and the Minister of the Environment, the member from St. Catharines.

Much has already been said about SLAPP legislation, and truly, in my opinion, trying to silence democracy and the right to speak out on matters of public interest is just outright corporate-wind-turbine bullying; that's what that is. But you know what? I've already said there has been enough said about SLAPP legislation, but there's one thing that has yet to be mentioned here. That's how this government and their prop partners, the NDP, have been slapping Ontarians around through expensive hydro rates that are driving business out of Ontario, resulting in thousands of job losses; paying other jurisdictions to take our excess hydro that the taxpayers of Ontario have already paid for to have produced; crippling red tape and increased taxes. These are all the things that they're doing in terms of slapping Ontarians around.

Speaker, the PC Party is prepared to debate our leader's private member's bill that will bring one million jobs to Ontario in eight years. I thank the member from Kingston and the Islands, also known as the Attorney General, for bringing forth this piece of legislation. We will support this particular bill, but in all truth and sincerity, far more important issues really do need to be debated in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. *Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 19 February 2014

Mercredi 19 février 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 February 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

YOUTH SMOKING PREVENTION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves second reading of Bill 131.

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to do this because he introduced it, and he'll share.
Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, how do you know I will share?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a sense that you will.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was my pleasure to move second reading of this important bill, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. This is a bill that is being shepherded by the Minister of Health and today I wish to just welcome the debate here in this Legislature, and as you surmised, share my time with the Minister of Health. So with that, I will ask if I can turn it over to her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good speech.
The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, good morning, Speaker. I rise today to talk further about Bill 131, the proposed Youth Smoking Prevention Act that I introduced on November 18, 2013. It would amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I will also be speaking about proposed amendments to Ontario regulation 48/06, made under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

Before I go any further, I really want to recognize the many officials in the ministry, in the health promotion division. Their hard work has brought this bill to us. I would also like to sincerely thank our partners, including

the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, and the Ontario Lung Association. Their passionate advocacy on behalf of many Ontario families impacted by tobacco smoke has been instrumental in bringing forth this proposed legislation today.

We all know about the harmful effects of tobacco smoking. We all know about the lives it harms and the lives it takes every single day in this province and across the country. I think every one of us in this House understands our shared responsibility to protect Ontarians, particularly the youngest Ontarians, from the harmful effects of smoking. That means protecting our children from exposure to second-hand smoke. It also means preventing young Ontarians from taking up smoking in the first place.

I'm proud of our government's record in this area. We have worked hard to toughen tobacco laws, ban smoking in public places and encourage more Ontarians to quit altogether, and I'm pleased that Ontario's smoking rate has dropped as a result of our efforts. According to the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit, 6% of grade 11 and 12 students had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days, down from 12% in 2005—so half. In 2005, twice as many students in grades 11 and 12 had smoked. For the general population, smoking rates have declined by five percentage points since 2000, now at 18%.

But there is still more we can and I would say we must do. The first pillar of our action plan for health care is keeping Ontarians healthy. To make that happen, we're determined to have the lowest smoking rate in Canada, a distinction currently held by British Columbia at 15%. The legislation we're debating today would take the vital next step in ensuring that comes to pass. Bill 131, if passed, would take strong action to protect Ontarians from the harmful effects of exposure to tobacco smoke. It would help prevent young people from starting to use tobacco, and it would move us further along the path toward having the lowest smoking rate in Canada.

Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death, preventable disease and premature death in Ontario. Tobacco use accounts for about 13,000 deaths in our province every year. Speaker, I wager to say that if something else was causing 13,000 deaths in our province, we would all be supportive of efforts to reduce that. So 13,000 deaths—that's enough to populate many of our communities—gone, every year; their families left behind to grieve their loss.

There is no question that the toll on individuals, on families and on communities is huge, as is the cost to our

health care system; and that's a heavy burden we all have to bear. Tobacco-related illnesses account for more than 10% of acute hospital days. Smoking also causes 80% of lung cancers and 80% of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Every year, tobacco-related diseases cost the province about \$1.9 billion, almost \$2 billion, in direct health care expenses and an additional \$5.8 billion in indirect costs such as lost productivity.

When we introduced our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy in 2005, the serious harm to health that smoking tobacco could cause was already well known and well documented. However, new research shows that the health implications of tobacco use go beyond what was known when the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy was first implemented. For example, we now know that smoking can cause cancer not just in the lungs but in at least 18 different sites in our bodies. It can lead to increased post-surgical complications, and it can result in heart disease and stroke. Knowing all this, our government is taking further measures to achieve our goal of making Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and to grow old. Our proposed Youth Smoking Prevention Act is a logical next step in our efforts to promote the health of Ontarians and protect them, especially our young people, from tobacco use.

The first step, as I have said, was the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, launched in 2005. We created that strategy in order to meet the challenge of reducing tobacco use in the province. It made Ontario a national and international leader in tobacco control. The strategy takes action on three fronts: The first is helping people to quit; the second is preventing people from taking up tobacco use, especially young people; and the third is protecting children and adults from exposure to tobacco use and tobacco smoke. We knew then that a comprehensive approach would be the most effective in reducing tobacco use. The strategy initially focused on enforcing the Smoke-Free Ontario Act's groundbreaking protections from second-hand smoke in bars, restaurants and other enclosed workplaces. To help stop young people from starting to smoke, and to protect youth from exposure to cigarette displays in stores, we later prohibited tobacco marketing displays in convenience stores—so-called “power walls.”

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Subsequent amendments created even stronger protections for the young people of Ontario. In 2009, we protected kids from exposure to second-hand smoke in motor vehicles. In 2011, we announced our commitment to renew the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy through new investments to help more people quit smoking, and to work with young people and educators to keep schools smoke-free. We also introduced initiatives to cut off the supply of contraband tobacco. With this new direction, the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy's focus shifted to cessation and prevention activities. The Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group, whose members include leaders in tobacco control, have identified these as key actions.

On the cessation front, our government introduced new initiatives aimed at engaging workplaces and more

health care professionals and institutions in supporting the cessation needs of their employees and patients, as well as supporting youth prevention efforts in school communities. As part of our plan to help smokers who want to quit, community health centres across the province now provide over-the-counter nicotine cessation aids, nicotine replacement therapy and counselling at no cost to smokers.

In collaboration with community, workplace and health care partners, Ontario has launched two more innovative smoking cessation initiatives, partnering with workplaces and 11 public health units to reduce smoking among workers in the industrial and service sectors, and helping patients in hospitals and regional cancer centres quit smoking.

These new initiatives built on the success of the other supports we offer smokers in Ontario, including free nicotine replacement therapy at 128 family health teams across the province. In October 2012, we announced that Ontario's pharmacists will now have an expanded role, with the ability to prescribe medication to help people quit smoking. Now that they can access this service from their local pharmacist, more Ontarians will receive the help they need to quit smoking safely, more quickly and closer to home. This is all part of our ongoing work with our partners to create a “no wrong door” system for smokers to get help to quit smoking. That includes government investments through the strategy to assist smokers in getting the help they need to stop smoking from post-secondary campuses, some public health units, addiction agencies, primary care settings, hospitals, workplaces, family health teams, community health centres, regional cancer centres and aboriginal health access centres.

In partnership with public health units, non-governmental organizations, health professionals and institutions, my ministry employs a mix of tools and programs to support the aim of the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. These organizations deliver programs and services. They train smoke-free Ontario partners and support research on the impact of tobacco on the lives of the people of Ontario. Our government also ensures that Ontario drug benefit recipients who smoke are eligible for smoking cessation counselling offered through community pharmacists and for cessation medications. The strategy funds the Smokers' Helpline, which provides cessation counselling online and by telephone. Organizational change in cessation practices has been achieved in clinical settings by changing practices within hospitals, embedding cessation into care pathways and other related patient care processes.

Speaker, these are the right investments for Ontario. Other jurisdictions have shown that, for every dollar we invest in a comprehensive tobacco control program, we save as much as \$50 in health care expenditures.

Since most people start smoking when they're young, preventing young people from taking up tobacco use is a particularly effective way to achieve savings. Our proposed amendments also focus on protecting Ontarians

from exposure to second-hand smoke, which could yield significant savings to the health care system and, more importantly, to help save lives. As we all know, a healthy Ontario is more productive and helps grow our economy.

These compelling facts form the backdrop against which we need to consider the proposed amendments. With this proposed legislation, our intent is to focus once again on protecting Ontarians from second-hand smoke, or preventing people from starting to smoke in the first place. The legislation aligns with our platform commitments and our action plan for health care.

We have decided to take such an activist role because research shows that when government is highly involved in tobacco control, with strong legislation and programs that ensure people have the right information and supports, fewer people end up smoking. That benefits all of us and helps protect the health care system we all share and cherish.

Speaker, the protections included in our proposed legislation reflect input from stakeholders and the Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group; they address emerging trends in tobacco manufacturing; they respond to enforcement challenges identified by inspectors; they reflect increased public support for action; and they help Ontario maintain its role as a leader in tobacco control.

I should point out that since the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy was created in 2005, many public and private institutions and organizations have taken action on tobacco control beyond the rules laid out in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. These organizations are taking action voluntarily, including establishing smoke-free hospital grounds, smoke-free campuses and smoke-free playgrounds and sports fields, because they recognize the value of decreasing tobacco use. I do want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of the dedicated Ontarians who have demonstrated their support for our actions to date, and have contributed to reduce smoking in the province. We're proposing to build on these voluntary efforts to encourage more organizations to take similar action so that healthier environments and workplaces can be experienced by people wherever they live, work and study in Ontario.

With our determined efforts and the help of our dedicated partners, Ontario now boasts 255,000 fewer smokers.

Despite its successes, the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy's interventions to reduce smoking rates are being undermined on a number of fronts. For example, young smokers are particularly vulnerable to temptation with the ready availability of flavoured tobacco products. Kids are routinely exposed to tobacco use and tobacco smoke on sports fields, and seeing adults smoke on restaurant and bar patios leads young people to believe that smoking is socially acceptable, which increases the likelihood of them starting to smoke. So even though I'm proud of how far we've come and the terrific results we've achieved, I am more determined than ever to reach our ambitious goal of having the lowest smoking rate in Canada.

With this proposed legislation, we intend to do all we can to make smoking less visible and less socially acceptable. Our proposed legislative and regulatory amendments, if passed, would implement our government's commitment to increase fines, focus on protecting kids and youth, and move us closer to our goal of reducing tobacco use in Ontario to the lowest in the country.

Let me now discuss some of the highlights of the proposed legislation and regulatory amendments. First, to prevent children and youth from accessing tobacco products and protect them from the harmful effects of smoking, the proposed legislative and regulatory amendments would, if passed, double fines for those who sell tobacco to kids, making them the highest in Canada. Right now, compared to other provinces, Ontario has one of the lowest set fines for offences related to youth access to tobacco. Higher fines would have a strong deterrent effect, making people think twice before selling tobacco to kids. More importantly, I'm convinced that higher fines would help to reduce kids' access to tobacco.

Second, we would prohibit the sale of tobacco products containing flavouring—flavouring, Speaker, like bubble gum or strawberry. There would be certain exemptions. This is not the first time our government has taken action on flavoured tobacco. In 2010, an amendment to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act prohibited persons from selling, offering to sell, distributing and offering to distribute flavoured cigarillos. That same year, the federal government amended its Tobacco Act to prohibit the sale of cigarettes, cigarillos and rolling papers containing specified flavours, with an exemption for menthol.

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However, flavoured tobacco products are still available and remain particularly appealing to youth because of their taste and their appearance. We know that tobacco manufacturers use flavoured tobacco to entice youth to use tobacco, and we know that kids are much more likely to use flavoured products than are adults. Bill 131 would ensure that these products cannot be sold in Ontario. The ban would apply to all flavoured tobacco products, including cigarettes, blunt wraps, cigars, pipe tobacco, smokeless tobacco and water pipe tobacco. Because the focus of the ban is on flavoured tobacco products that appeal to youth for their distinctive fruity, sweet or candy flavours, we are proposing to exempt menthol, tobacco-enhancing flavours and flavours used to reduce the harsh tastes of certain types of tobacco.

The third element of this legislation, these proposed amendments, would authorize inspectors appointed under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to seize improperly packaged tobacco and tobacco products that are prohibited for sale under the act. Expanding seizure authority would support the enforcement of the act and ensure that products prohibited for sale under the act are removed from point of sale. As well, the proposed amendments would authorize inspectors to take a sample of a substance for the purpose of determining compliance with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act's prohibition on smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces. Finally, it would also enable the

ministry to determine the extent to which tobacco is being used by water pipe bar operators.

Fourth, we would amend the legislation to prohibit the sale of tobacco on specific government of Ontario properties. We would also amend the regulation to prohibit tobacco sales on post-secondary education campuses. The Smoke-Free Ontario Act already prohibits the sale of tobacco in vending machines, hospitals, psychiatric facilities, long-term-care homes, pharmacies and facilities licensed under the Independent Health Facilities Act. Our proposed amendments would extend these prohibitions.

We're taking action in post-secondary education settings because young adulthood is a critical period when smoking habits become established. This would build on the work being done by our partner Leave the Pack Behind to provide more on-campus supports to students trying to quit their tobacco use. Our proposals would provide supportive environments to prevent people from starting to smoke and make it easier for them to cut down and quit smoking.

In addition to these legislative amendments through Bill 131, we're proposing a number of regulatory amendments to further protect the people of Ontario from exposure to tobacco use. To protect workers and patrons, especially kids, from exposure to second-hand smoke, our proposed amendments to Ontario regulation 48/06 would ban smoking on all restaurant and bar patios, including those that are uncovered. As well, amendments would ban smoking on playgrounds and sports fields, and further restrict smoking on the grounds of hospitals and specified provincial government properties. Banning smoking on patios, playgrounds and sports fields would make smoking less visible to young adults, who have a high risk of taking up smoking, and de-normalize social smoking among young adults.

Many municipalities have already taken action on similar fronts. In fact, 58 municipalities representing 61% of the population have already banned smoking on playgrounds; 45 municipalities representing 37% of the population have already banned smoking on sports and recreation fields and facilities; and nine Ontario municipalities currently have a full smoking ban in place on patios. A province-wide patio ban would make it easier for businesses and patrons to comply with the law and would provide complete protection for workers, patrons and kids everywhere in Ontario.

There is strong support for these initiatives. Our partners, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario Lung Association and the Ontario Medical Association, do support these initiatives.

But I know that engaging the public is crucial to our success. We've worked hard to get our message out. For example, we launched a highly successful social marketing campaign last spring that focuses on cessation among young adults, a population with the highest smoking rate among all age groups. More recently, we posted a summary of the draft regulatory measures on the gov-

ernment of Ontario's Regulatory Registry for public review and comment for 45 days. The feedback we received was overwhelmingly supportive, including many submissions from young people in Ontario applauding these initiatives. We will consider all of the input and suggestions we've received through this process as we continue to draft the regulations.

Speaker, I believe every member in this House understands and shares our commitment to protecting young Ontarians from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke. It places a heavy burden on our health care system, and most importantly, it takes a heavy toll on too many lives. These amendments, if passed, would strengthen our ability to reduce kids' exposure to tobacco smoke in their daily lives and help prevent our young people from using any tobacco products. Selling flavoured tobacco is one of the few remaining ways that tobacco companies have of marketing to our kids, and we have a responsibility to act. These amendments would also protect more Ontarians from the harms of second-hand smoke and make smoking less visible and de-normalize tobacco use.

Again, Speaker, I'd like to thank our valued health system partners, as well as everyday Ontarians, for their support of this proposed legislation, and for their dedication and commitment to the health of the people of Ontario.

I call upon members of all three parties in this House to come together in support of this vital piece of legislation. Together, we can take this strong action to invest in the health and well-being of our people so they can live healthier lives and contribute to a healthier economy. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I take some great pleasure in standing here today to talk about anti-smoking in action and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

I was very proud to have had my father, Dan MacLeod—Daniel James MacLeod—bring in one of the first anti-smoking bylaws in Canada, actually in North America. This would be well over a decade ago. He was bringing it forward and at the time, I remember, my uncle was dying of lung cancer. He was 42 when he passed. His name was Cedric MacLeod—Cedric Nelson MacLeod. My father had to miss a council meeting in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, when he was bringing in this important bylaw, and was it ever divisive at the time. There were smokers' rights groups. They were vowing to defeat my father in the next election because he was bringing this forward, but he believed it was the right thing to do. When you look back at 2000—that's 14 years ago—that legislation, or that bylaw, at the time in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, a small town of 10,000 people, was that divisive. Today, we stand here as legislators and we all know it's the right thing to do to curb smoking. We know because of the health effects. We know that people who become addicted to nicotine later in life want to quit because of some of the ill effects and its approach on cancer and what it does to young people as they age.

I think it's important and I'm really proud of the contribution my father made before he died of cancer, although a different type of cancer. It wasn't caused by smoking.

I'd also like to pay tribute to my dear friend Norm Sterling, who, when he was a member of this assembly, years before anybody else was thinking about this, was putting legislation on the floor of this assembly to deal with anti-smoking.

So you know something? I think it's important that we're having this discussion. I congratulate all my colleagues on all sides of the chamber for taking action on this important matter. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today and support this act. We've heard from two parties. It appears it is going to get support through the House, and hopefully it gets that support very, very quickly. It's a piece of legislation, I think, whose time has come.

The previous speaker talked about remarks that were made in the past and what other people felt about whether we should ban tobacco or not. At the time that it was first introduced that we should restrict the use of tobacco, certainly there were a number of members of the public and the industry, I suppose, who were opposed to that because, at the time, they felt that business, perhaps, was more important than public health. I don't think anybody in our House agrees with that sentiment anymore.

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I think the legislation is well drafted. I think the remarks that we've heard from at least one member of the opposition speak to the fact that this is something we can all do together, because we know the best way to prevent somebody from becoming addicted to any substance, including tobacco, is to limit its use in the first place, to not introduce it in the first place to our kids, to keep it out of the way of our kids to make sure that our kids understand that it's not a normal thing to smoke.

I had two parents who didn't smoke, Speaker, and I remember, as a child, feeling a little weird because our house didn't smell like the other houses. I thought the other houses smelled cool. I think at one point I almost wanted my parents to smoke so I could have a cool-smelling, smoky house. As it turned out, my parents were ahead of their time, and I thank them for that.

I think that, as a province, if we're able to set this ambitious goal of trying to have the lowest smoking rate in all of Canada, if we can beat BC out—I think a little competition, a little bit of fun could make this very, very serious issue something we can all get behind as legislators, knowing that it's going to help young Ontarians. It's going to prevent them from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke now and into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to echo what we've already heard in the chamber today. This is an important piece of legislation that's going to do wonders

in terms of proactively helping people realize that their health matters, and, in that, hopefully curb a few health costs down the road in later life. I think about how they're enticing young people with flavoured tobacco—it's like, for goodness' sakes.

People need to understand the ramifications here. My father suffered with emphysema, COPD and probably farmer's lung as well. He lived on oxygen for 12 years, primarily because of life choices. He smoked. He wishes he could have turned the clock back, but we could do it now. We can help people realize that their health is very, very precious. It's only when you see people suffer that you realize some of these things we're doing in the House really can make a difference.

I applaud the idea of banning smoking on schoolyards. That's just ridiculous; I always thought it was and continue to hold that to this day. The essence of the bill is very, very good. We all have our personal stories that make us want to stand up and support this effort that Minister Matthews has brought forward.

Just a little caveat, though: I'd be remiss if I didn't say, as critic for small business and red tape, that I worry about the impact on the small businesses. We have to be mindful and sensitive to what a banning on patios may have on our restaurants and bars. But if we bring everybody to the table and really educate people as to why this is important, I think we should be able to move this through very easily.

Thank you to all of my colleagues for understanding the significance of this particular bill. While I'm a little cautious that we can't be handcuffing our small businesses, this is the proper step to be taking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the legislation proposed—it's interesting to hear once again with yet another piece of legislation that there's a significant consensus in the House that we have a significant problem out there, and that we have legislation which is designed, both in a regulatory fashion and a legislative fashion, to improve those circumstances. Members I've listened to—the minister herself, of course—have all indicated that this is necessary.

When we look back at some of the landmarks that took place, some of the changes in attitude, it's actually quite phenomenal. Even people who were ardent smokers, or today may still be ardent smokers, are often in support of legislation of this kind.

You and I, Mr. Speaker, are sports fans. We can recall going to arenas in years gone by where, if you went out into the lobby or hallway, you didn't have to have a cigarette in your mouth to be smoking; you simply had to breathe. At that time, you were confronted with a lot of smoke. We used to see it in bars, restaurants and airplanes even. It's hard to believe that they used to allow smoking in certain parts of airplanes and in restaurants as though, somehow, the smoke wouldn't go from one end to the other.

Now, we also recognize that in taverns, for instance—that was once considered to be part of going to a tavern.

People would go home and their clothes would be full of smoke. They would have to air them out, wash them, send them to the cleaners. More importantly, it had a profound negative effect on their health.

So when I hear members of this House speak favourably of legislation of this kind, I trust that there will not be a prolonged debate, unless it's necessary, that it will go to committee and that we can see this bill passed by this Legislature. Certainly that would be my hope.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The health minister has two minutes.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say I'm delighted to hear that the official opposition—it sounds like they will support this. I want to say how much I appreciate that, and how much I appreciate the personal stories that were told here. I think all of us—in fact, I'm sure all of us—know someone close to us who has died from smoking. In fact, half of smokers will die from smoking-related illness. So I'm very grateful to hear of the support from the official opposition.

I'm a bit surprised I haven't heard from the NDP, but I can only hope that that support is there. I know that the member from Nickel Belt is very supportive of it. I'm assuming that she has convinced her caucus to support this legislation.

I want to comment a bit on the impact of small business because, of course, we are all concerned about that. I draw great optimism from the experience in Ottawa. They are one of the municipalities that has banned smoking on patios and noticed no impact on business whatsoever. In fact, many non-smokers enjoy sitting on patios where there isn't smoke. I know I have been driven indoors from patios by the tobacco smoke on patios, so I think this is the right thing to do. I have no question about that.

I am reminded about how controversial this was just a few years ago. I am still amused, when I see the no-smoking sign on airplanes, to think that we used to allow smoking on airplanes. We go into restaurants now and would be astonished if somebody lit up a cigarette. Today what is normal was not too many years ago not normal at all—in fact, controversial.

So I'm delighted. I hope we're coming together as one, and let's get this done as quickly as we can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, I would seek unanimous consent to stand down the lead of the official opposition for another time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the leadoff. Is that agreeable?

Carry on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

This doesn't happen very often. I can't remember when was the last time it happened, where I'm actually going to begin my address by saying that I'm going to pick up where the minister left off. That is not likely hap-

pening very often, because I have my very extensive speech written right here.

It starts out a little bit about the history of smoking and how we have evolved and our attitudes towards it, and our tolerance or lack thereof as time has moved on. You know, my father was elected to this Legislature in 1963 and my father was a smoker. I mean, he was a soldier in the Second World War. There were not many of those people who were infantrymen in the Second World War who did not smoke. You were given your daily ration of tobacco as part of the payment for being willing to risk your life for democracy and your country.

There were a lot of people who were smokers in this Legislature back then. There are very few now, if any. I don't know if there are ones but I'm sure there are a couple. I'm not even sure, and I don't know the actual history, but I know that even into the mid-1980s, members of this Legislature smoked at committee. During committee proceedings, members of the Legislature would smoke while the committee hearings were going on. I suspect that at some time they actually smoked in the chamber. If my dad was around I could ask him, but he's not. He didn't die from smoking, but I suspect that maybe even back in those days, they maybe even smoked in the chamber.

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I remember when we had our hardware store in Barry's Bay, and while my dad and my mother ran it, anybody who smoked just smoked on the floor. They could be serving a customer and have a cigarette hanging out of their mouth or checking a customer out and the cigarette just goes down into the ashtray while they check the customer out, and nobody thought anything of it.

I remember when I took over the business and I said, "There won't be any smoking on the floor." It was a little bit controversial when I said, "No, you can't be smoking even if you're not with a customer when you're in the checkout. You can't be smoking on the floor of the business." But that was in the 1980s. So, I mean, we've come even a long way from then.

But the smoking prevention act of whatever you called it there the minister from 2005—I voted against it, and I was chastised for it, but I felt I was standing up for the restaurant owners who maybe weren't prepared. Nine years have gone by since that time and, boy, the world has continued to evolve and continued to change, and our feeling towards smoking has changed as well.

Years ago, if you went to an event—say a dance hall or something like that—you might be there for three or four hours. The smoke was just hanging from the ceiling. Even if you didn't smoke yourself, you didn't find it that bad, because you'd become desensitized to the smoke. You'd go home and the next morning, you'd feel like you had sand in your eyes, but you still didn't feel anything driving you inside to say, "That's got to stop." No. It was, "If they want to smoke, they can smoke," and "If I don't want to be here, I guess I don't have to be here."

But as we have changed our views on smoking and changed the number of places that smoking is considered

to be acceptable or not acceptable, our sensitivities to smoking have changed dramatically. I'm talking about that dance hall that I might have been in back in the 1970s or whatever and not really thought too much about it.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. Well, listen, nobody remarked much in any positive way on my dancing. I assure you that.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just your dancing?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thanks, Ernie. My friend from Oxford says, "Just your dancing?"

So at that time, it didn't bother you that much, or at least you didn't think it bothered you that much. Today, as I was saying to folks at the table, look at it: If somebody lights up a cigarette down on the waterfront, I can smell it up at St. Clair. I mean, today we are sensitive. You're walking down the sidewalk, and if there's someone walking down the sidewalk, you get within 20 feet, and you can already detect that there's cigarette smoke in the air.

That's why I want to talk about—and I'll get to the point, too—the issue with the restaurant owners and the patios. I think we need to allow them to voice their concerns, but I actually share experiences with what the minister talked about, how people now have said, "I'd actually like to go and enjoy my meal on the patio, but I won't, because I go on the patio, and even if there's nobody smoking on the patio when I get there, in the middle of my meal, if somebody comes in and it's a smoker, it changes my sense of enjoyment for that meal at that particular establishment."

I think that we've reached—and I'm not sure—look, nobody wants to have change. Sometimes the status quo is the easiest thing to accept. But I think that, in the long run, they'll find that they will attract as many new clients to their patios as they may lose on a short-term basis because of the changes in regulations with respect to smoking. I think it's worth having that dialogue with that association, the restaurant and hotel owners etc. But I think that we're finding more and more that some of them are moving in that direction on their own, because they're finding that their patios are not drawing as many people.

The number of adults smoking is continuing to decline—thank goodness for that. I'll talk about how dismayed I am about youth smoking shortly. I hope I get to that. But the number of adults who are smoking has declined, is declining. Adults are taking advantage of the opportunities presented to them with regard to smoking cessation programs. I just hope they're all successful, because it's for everybody's benefit if they can be successful.

Everybody who is a smoker is affected in a different way. Someone who has been a smoker for many, many years can quit smoking and really never look back. Some others, they quit, they start again—the addiction affects everybody differently. We're all chemically similar, but we're all chemically individual as well, so the addiction

affects people in different ways. Some people spend their lives just trying to kick that habit. So if there are ways that we can bolster their efforts, I think that's something that is positive. I don't think there's any question: It is an inarguable statement that you are better off if you're a non-smoker than if you're a smoker. Any argument? I don't think so.

It's great to have a debate when nobody's heckling me. Only my own people were heckling me about my dancing skills, or lack thereof.

I was talking earlier about how dismayed I am when I see young people begin to smoke. It kind of boggles my mind that, given the information we have today, given the social pressures—maybe I don't understand the social pressures of being a teenager, because it has been a while, but I have raised some. I have raised some, and some have just exited their teens not that long ago. I'm proud to say, or pleased to say, that none of our children smoke, save and except for sometimes when they're fishing and they might have a couple of Captain Blacks or whatever they're called—Colts, or something like that—some cigars to keep away the bugs. But at one time, I did see them coming home with these flavoured smokes. They're about the size of a cigarette, but they're dark like a cigar, and they were cherry-this and whatever-that.

I was listening, when the bill was introduced, to the talk about the number of flavoured products out there. It's really astounding. Folks, I can't say they're as bad, but they're as focused. I mean, you look at the breakfast cereal ads these days. That crap doesn't qualify as a food, a breakfast food. Please, I mean, it's chocolate in the middle of a fake biscuit or some kind of thing, and that's what they market to our children for breakfast cereal.

They know how children can be influenced by what is being marketed to them. Of course, when you're trying to tap your new market—there's no point in tobacco companies going after the 70-year-old smoker, because he ain't long for this world. He's not going to buy a lot of cigarettes before he says sayonara. But if you can get somebody who is 12, 13, 14 or whatever hooked on smoking, maybe you're going to have access to some revenue for some time.

We'd all be better off if there was no smoking. As I say, I am dismayed about youth who are starting to smoke and thinking that it's cool. The member from Oakville was talking about when he was younger. Maybe he thought it might have been cool to have a house that stunk of smoke. Back then, he would have said "smelled of smoke, had the aroma of smoke"; today, you'd say "stunk of smoke." When you walk into a home that is occupied by heavy smokers—my wife is in real estate, and right off the bat, if you go into a home that is occupied by heavy smokers, for a lot of people there's an issue there. They want to make sure that that smell is going to be eliminated before they entertain the purchase of that home.

0950

All of these are practical considerations, but the social side of smoking has changed dramatically. I mean, while

at one time it may have been considered to be cool and there was nothing offensive, people find the smell of smoke—the after-smell of smoke—not an environment that they want to be around—the people that are the smokers.

So why would the children of today want to become smokers? Because, while it may not affect them at this time, if they're among a group of people who are doing the same activity, it is going to affect them down the road. I've got to believe—I'm not a fortune teller, and I guess I'll accept that maybe I'm a bit prejudiced on the issue—that if somebody walked into your office looking for a job, and they're a smoker, they're going to have to be a lot better than the person who is not a smoker, because right off the bat, the smoker is more susceptible to be likely taking breaks to go down and have a cigarette; plus, in your office you're going to have that environment. I'm not trying to be mean-spirited or anything else. I'm talking about the reality of the world we live in today. People have to be aware of that. I'm not trying to be judgmental. I'm just trying to point out that this is where we are. This is 2014, and this is where we are.

But on that subject, and I know the minister has been listening very, very closely to what I have to say, and on occasion she has been nodding, which I suspect is her nod of approval of what I'm saying—this is new ground, folks. This is new ground. I kind of half expect I'm going to get a nice note after this. However, this may change over the next six minutes, because I know—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakubuski: The Minister of Labour says, “You were doing so well, Yak”—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member knows that he doesn't have cross-conversations and leaving me out; I hate being left out. Through the Chair.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I could never leave you out, Speaker. I could never leave you out, neither intentionally nor unintentionally. But if it appears that way, we're going to try to bring this back through you. So, through the Speaker, I say that the Minister of Health over there—but of course I'm addressing the Speaker—may not like the next part of my speech. And it won't be just the Minister of Health. I'm not singling her out. The Minister of Community Safety will be interested in this as well.

Okay. You know, when the member for Nickel Belt was talking about it when the bill was first introduced and talking about all these flavoured cigarettes, where did she find all those 19 kinds, or whatever the heck it was, of flavoured cigarettes? Where did she find them? She found them at a smoke shack at a First Nations. So if we're going to do everything we can to protect our children, we have to also address the source of the problem. We cannot say that this is a threat to the health of our children and therefore the health of our entire society, because our children make up our society and will be, when they become adults and move on, the predominant population of the society in the years to come—we can't on one side of the equation say, “We're taking all of

these measures to protect them in the world outside of contraband tobacco,” and then say, “Now, the minister is saying we're doing something.” Well, the truth is, they're doing very little, and very little because I know how many smoke shacks are in business on Pikwàkanagàn of Golden Lake in my riding. I was in Port Dover last year, and I've seen the smoke shacks going through Six Nations.

So we cannot, on one hand, say that this is our commitment to our youth and then ignore where much of that product comes from, because youth can be trapped by—I talked about the flavour of the cigarettes, and that can be an enticement. The other enticement is the low cost. If you've got a product that is desirable but you can't afford it, it remains just that: desirable. But if you've got a product that is desirable and affordable, then the likelihood of you actually purchasing that product goes up significantly.

I'm not going to stand here and point out the solutions to the government because I don't have them in my hand. But there are groups out there who have been lobbying the government, and it affects legitimate businesses as well. So we cannot ignore that segment of this debate. If we're talking about the health of our children, our grandchildren and the youth, we cannot ignore the contraband tobacco issue and just slough it off to the side and say, “That's not part of it.” That's only attacking half of the problem.

Theoretically, if we convinced every person in the world not to smoke, then there'd be no market for it, no matter where it comes from—understood. But we don't live in that theoretical Alice-in-Wonderland world. I know that the people on the other side, sometimes they do. I was actually listening to the finance minister yesterday, Speaker, and I thought that, honest to God, he was going to be appearing in a new Disney version of Charles and Kathleen go to wonderland or something, because it was fantasyland about what they were thinking about the future of Ontario. But I'm going off the topic, and you know me, I always stay on the topic and I go through the Speaker.

So let's stay on the topic. We have some opportunities here to reduce the access to places where smoking will be encountered. I like the idea of public places and playgrounds. We should not be sending our kids out to a place where the focus is enjoyment and physical fitness and then have them subjected to cigarette smoking or smoking of any kind. So there are some very good parts in this legislation. There's the obvious omission, which maybe needs to be dealt with in another piece of legislation, not through the Ministry of Health, but perhaps through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and I look forward to that coming.

I look forward to the day when it is not just my children who don't smoke but nobody's children smoke. We have eight grandchildren. I hope every one of them grows up to be a non-smoker as well. If that happens and that is repeated in families all across this province and all across this country, and eventually all across this world, it will be a better world for all of us. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise and respond and to comment on the remarks from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I enjoyed his description of the change in attitudes and behaviours that we've seen in this province over the years, and in particular since the province introduced very tough anti-smoking legislation. I am reflecting back on my own experience—and the Minister of Health will certainly remember this—when London, our community, was one of the first municipalities in the province to pass a smoke-free bylaw. That was due to the efforts of a community coalition called the Council for a Tobacco-Free Community. I was proud to be part of that work that pushed the municipality to prohibit designated smoking rooms. At that time, the debate was about allowing ventilated places for smoking. The evidence said that this will not remove the toxins that people who are exposed to smoke in designated smoking rooms will inhale. As part of that effort, we brought in Heather Crowe, who members of this House may remember was the Ottawa waitress who died from lung cancer that she had contracted as a result of exposure to second-hand smoke during her 40 years as a waitress.

I think that we have seen that legislation does have an impact. Legislation is important, along with public education, to change behaviours and attitudes and move the province closer to an area where we will reduce the exposure to second-hand smoke and prevent young people from smoking. I want to congratulate the government for bringing forward this legislation. It's important. We need to move it to committee.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to join the debate and support the bill as introduced by the Minister of Health. I have to say that I have enjoyed, as usual, the very positive comments by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. As he says, it's a wonderful time in the House, even though it may last six minutes. But I hope that he's going to have some change of heart and may continue for a long time. I think this is a positive issue, and I can see the support throughout the House.

I think it was only last week, Speaker, that we saw the federal budget putting another \$5 on a carton of cigarettes. I haven't heard any cry from any side—young or old, smokers and non. So that shows you the support that is out there. I was pleased to see that the minister had considerable consultation prior to bringing out the legislation.

I have to go back to my last century, Speaker, my previous life, when I remember the North York council chambers were dealing with not allowing smoking in doughnut shops. Wow. I think for two, three nights, we had the council full of people saying that was the end of the world, and every coffee shop was going to close and nobody would go there anymore. Look, we have come a

long way. I mean, you can go in any coffee shop; people are enjoying their coffee without the effect of smoke, and they are still in business and growing all the time.

It was nice to hear the Minister of Health saying, as well, that this has found considerable acceptance among our young people. This is the main crux of the legislation that is in front of us, Speaker. We would like to do more. I hope that we can do more to bring young people not to smoke, and I hope that this will pass soon in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and address the comments from the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Speaker, I'd like to give you some of my experience with smoke, and it is in our business, in a decorating business we have. Every once in a while, we go into a house that people have been smoking in. It's interesting: When the curtains come off the windows and you get ready to paint, you can see discolouration on the ceilings; you can see it on the walls. There are times when you have to use a special paint, a stain blocker, to keep the nicotine from coming out through the paint, or you wash the walls trying to get rid of these stains.

The other interesting part about it is when you are painting your walls, as the paint dries, there's a certain amount of humidity or moisture that comes out of the paint, and if you have a crew in there, you can get enough moisture that the windows start to get fogged up. Certainly when my wife is working, a lot quicker than I do, she usually gets more moisture on the windows than I. However, you can start to see, as the windows moisten up, the nicotine start to come down the windows.

These aren't new houses. These are houses that people have lived in for a period of time. In a lot of the houses that we've done with this issue, people have stopped smoking in the house. If they continue to smoke, they smoke outside. And I think that young children—I like to study history. Maybe we should take some of these young folks into some of these houses and see what can happen, and that is really ugly. It may stop them and help prevent them from starting smoking in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to stand and comment to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and, once again, bring back the fact of where we've come from to where we are today, and the difference that I myself, as a previous smoker, have felt, and how we struggled when the first laws were brought into place. I myself was a waitress at the time, working in establishments when the non-smoking came through. We thought it was the end of the world. We were going to lose all of our customers. Nothing was going to ever be the same. And when you walk into an establishment now, if you were to dare see someone light a cigarette, you would be like, "What are you doing? What is happening?" So, you know, it's a totally different change from what we've seen previously.

I myself, being in the public eye—and how life has changed for me. It became an embarrassment to me when I was a smoker, and how that changed, because now, today, I'm almost six months smoke-free and quite proud of that. It was something that I always enjoyed to do, so getting to the point of when you can wake up one day and say, "That's it. I'm done. I've had enough," and continuing to work through that process is a tough thing. I'd encourage people to really think deep into what they're doing to themselves, to their body, to the people who are around them. You don't really realize the difference that it makes to a person when you walk into a room and you smell like cigarettes, because, I'll tell you now, I can smell those smokers.

But I think it's a good thing that we're moving forward. I know that we need to be looking at small businesses, because I hear from constituents in my riding who are concerned that they're not going to be able to smoke on the patio anymore. And Hamilton has been one of those lead-takers when it comes to no smoking in the parks, no smoking in the establishments, no smoking on the patios. So I think it's great work brought forward by our member from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the member from London West, the minister responsible for seniors, and the members for Perth–Wellington and Hamilton Mountain for their comments on my address.

I want to point out some of the fine people who have encouraged me to support this act, as they're concerned about smoking among youth as well: a letter from Lara Mylly, the health promoter at the Whitewater Bromley Community Health Centre—thank you; Margaret Cliché from Beachburg, Ontario; Ellen Michaud from Beachburg, Ontario, as well; Dr. T.A. Rheume, from the Whitewater Bromley Community Health Centre; David Studham, the executive director of the Ottawa Valley Health and Wellness Centre; Judy Grasmuck from the Bonnechere Valley Satellite Clinic of the West Champlain Family Health Team; and my old friend and a former principal at Madawaska Valley District High School in Barry's Bay, Wilmer Matthews, who I've worked with on a number of different issues over the years. I want to thank them all for their input and encouraging us to support this legislation.

I think the goals are honourable, and we certainly will get there. The bill does have our support. As I and my colleague from Huron–Bruce have said, we do have to dialogue with the restaurant industry to ensure that they will—and I think at the end of the day they will accept that this, in the end, will be better for all of us. But we will have to have that dialogue, and that can take place at the committee level.

But, again, the goal is to eliminate—or reduce and eventually eliminate—smoking among our youth. If it's eliminated among our youth, eventually it will be eliminated among us all. Thank you very much, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm so pleased to have one of my constituents here: Taylor Horning from Merrickville, part of the Ontario Youth Parliament that will be here today. But I'm even more pleased that her sister Peyton, who's a former page, is here in the west members' gallery—and also her parents, Alexandra Prefasi-Horning and Paul Horning. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to welcome two people to the Legislature this morning: Angie Dawson, who started in my office yesterday, as well as a friend of mine from Kenora–Rainy River, Scott Jonassen. Welcome.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm very pleased to welcome a very special person here: my constituency assistant, Humaira Hamayun, who, in September, was diagnosed with cancer and has gone through six rounds of chemo and is in the middle of radiation treatment. She's here with her husband, Hamayun Jilani, and her sister-in-law, Hamayun's sister, who's visiting us from Pakistan, Samina Zeeshan. Would members please welcome them in the members' east gallery?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour today to introduce four representatives from MY Canada. They're young people determined to build a strong Canada for today and for future generations. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Good morning. I'm pleased this morning to welcome the first cohort of fellows from Studio Y, Ontario's social impact and youth leadership academy. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour for me to introduce the parents of page Emily Anderson: mother Kye-Young Kwon and father Neil Anderson. They're here with sisters Erica, Natasha, Helena and Elizabeth. They are with us in the public gallery this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That was me, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

I'm delighted to welcome Chaitali Senmajumder, who is here today. She's the mother of page Emon Senmajumder. I'm going to have to work with her to get the right pronunciation.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome a Burlington constituent, Dianne Caton, to the Legislature this morning. Dianne is in the members' gallery to show love and support for her daughter, Jessie Caton, who is serving as page captain today. Congratulations, Jessie.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to introduce Idil Burale, who is here with the Studio Y program at MaRS. She is an amazing community activist and a former con-

stituency assistant for both my friend Mike Colle—my PA—and myself. I would like to welcome her and her colleagues from Studio Y.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to introduce Megan Storey, who is a former co-op student in my constituency office. She's here with the model Parliament group today. I wish them all the best in the next three days of consultation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough—

Ms. Soo Wong: Agincourt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to welcome my intern at my Queen's Park office, Taylor Lew, sitting in the east gallery, as well as Meelesh Thakur, who is a grade 8 student in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, who's also participating in the model Parliament.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce from the riding of Nipissing Mary Beth Caliciuri, the mother of one of the mock parliamentarians today, Anthony Caliciuri.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like members to join me in welcoming Alexander Baggs from St. Catharines, who is participating in your model Parliament.

Mr. Steve Clark: I know the Minister of Economic Development is dying to introduce him, but I'm going to one-up him and I'm going to introduce Bruce Davis, who I feel is a great business person. He's the president of the Gananoque Brewing Co., and I'm so proud of him.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, I want to introduce the great Bruce Davis as well. As many of us know, he was a former chair of the Toronto District School Board and, as has been referenced, the proud purveyor of many craft beers through Gananoque Brewing Co.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I smell free beer. Introductions?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour today to welcome Eric Muellejans to Queen's Park. He's here on behalf of the mock Parliament. I'd like to say to Eric that I attribute my getting involved in politics to his late father, who was on student council with me back at Glencoe District High School a number of years ago. Welcome, Eric Muellejans.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join me in welcoming Robin Smith Forbes in the public gallery this morning, supporting her daughter Sarah Forbes, a page from Mississauga South.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I want to welcome to the Legislature this morning Sandy Buxton, David Strachan, Connie Spek and Kevin Newman from the Midhurst Ratepayers' Association, who will be meeting with me later on today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. Also from the model Parliament, representing Humberview Secondary

School in Bolton, I'd like to welcome Gurpreet Badesha, Tina Boutis and Brittany Cox. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Further introductions? The member from York Centre.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much. I also want to congratulate and add my welcome to the members from my riding for the model Parliament: George Philip and Louis Vatrt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): York—Simcoe, not York Centre.

Further introductions?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Welcome to all the students from the model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park. Particularly, I'm told that Ada Yang is here from my riding, so a special welcome to people from Guelph.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd also like to welcome the students, and in particular, from Scarborough—Guildwood, Judy Perpose. Welcome.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome Brendan Adamo from my riding for the model Parliament. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us in the public galleries today 85 students, as we've heard, from across the province, participating in the inaugural Legislative Assembly of Ontario model Parliament.

Before I ask us to welcome them, I would also like to say thank you very much to the staff here at the protocol office who have put together the entire program and are to be thanked on our behalf for bringing these young people.

Please join me in warmly welcoming our future parliamentarians to the Legislature today. I'd like to thank all parties for their support and participation in this very important project for our youth. Here they are. Welcome.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We are going to model for them their model Parliament.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I just caused a major problem.

The member from Parkdale—High Park.

1040

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: With your indulgence, Speaker—sorry—I just wanted to introduce somebody who just arrived: Peggy Nash, the official opposition in Ottawa's finance critic.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. I'm actually glad you did that. That might put some distance between what I said we were going to model and that, so we'll see what happens, but thank you.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): However, before we do start, I think it's time to get introduced to the other set of youth that we have here. I ask the pages to please assemble for introduction.

Emily Anderson from Chatham–Kent–Essex; from Burlington, Jessica Caton; from Richmond Hill, Meera Chopra; from St. Paul's, Thomas Clifford; from Brampton West, Robin Dhillon; from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Samer El-Galmady; from Mississauga South, Sarah Forbes; from Willowdale, Kevin Huang; from Nipissing, Jaclyn Hurley; from Barrie, Abbey Jackson; from Beaches–East York, Anne Lafaury; from Oakville, Shannon McCracken; from Timmins–James Bay, Owen Meunier; from Hamilton Mountain, Ibrahim Oleiche; from Newmarket–Aurora, Michael Alexander Sadono; from Sault Ste. Marie, Ella Santana; from Scarborough Centre, Emon Sennmajumder; from Peterborough, Nikola Skilton; from Ottawa West–Nepean, Shu Song; from Pickering–Scarborough East, Aqil Syed; and from Mississauga–Brampton South, Kiranpreet Walia.

These are our pages for this next session. Welcome.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Premier, yesterday, I talked about your failed record when it comes to job creation in the province, that we didn't add any new jobs in the entire year of 2013. Sometimes, I'm not sure what's worse: your jobs record or your fiscal record, because now, under the Liberal government, we have doubled our debt and we have the highest level of debt of any state or province in North America. This is very troubling. The two are related, I believe.

So, Premier, would you agree with me that if we want to send a signal that we're open for job creation and to restore hope to people in this province, it's important to balance the budget and pay down the debt as quickly as possible in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just thank the member opposite for the question and say to him that employment rose in this province by 95,000 jobs over the last year.

Interjection: He knows that.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He knows that, and I think he knows that, since June 2009, we have net new jobs of 440,000. So in fact, I think he knows that the way that we are working to work with communities, to invest in communities, to work with businesses and prosper—I think he knows that that is actually the way to go. We are not going to buy into or support a plan that would actually push good jobs out of the province and that would undermine labour. The strategies that the Leader of the Opposition is interested in would actually cut jobs, would cut programs and slash programs across government, and we don't believe that is the way to build to an aspirational future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As you know, clearly, Premier, your plan is not working. We're losing 300,000 manufacturing

jobs. We're deep in debt. It seems to me that it's basic sense: If the plan isn't working, you try a different plan, you try a different path. And while yesterday you and the leader of the NDP were basically arguing over what taxes to raise and when, the Ontario PC Party was laying out our plan to create a million jobs in the province of Ontario and restore hope.

We continue that path on how we get Ontario working again. My colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Doug Holyday, is introducing a bill later today called the Financial Accountability Officer Act. It would basically compel the new Financial Accountability Officer to look at areas of managed competition to ensure that we contract out services, where possible, where it makes sense for taxpayers, so we get the best quality at the best price to the taxpayer.

Premier, can I count on you to support Doug Holyday's very sensible, thoughtful and forward-looking bill?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member's question is about achieving savings, and just yesterday we announced changes to the public sector retiree benefits, which will save, I think, at full maturity, a billion dollars a year, so that is a very important and significant change. I hope that the leader of the third party supports that and thinks that that is a good idea.

I haven't seen the private member's bill that the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore is going to bring forward, but I understand that he couldn't identify any areas where this particular idea would apply. The notion of contracting out, which I guess is at the root of the issue—he couldn't identify whether he thought contracting out teachers was a good idea, or contracting out the police. He didn't have an answer to that.

Like the million jobs plan that the leader of the third party talked about, it is magical thinking. We don't engage in magical thinking. We have a plan, and that plan is working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: When it comes to our deep indebtedness and creating jobs, I wish you'd engage in any kind of thinking whatsoever. We need another plan.

Premier, I'm a little worried by your answer that you weren't watching Doug Holyday's press conference. He laid it out. It follows on the Drummond commission recommendations. Basically, we think there are all kinds of areas where we'd ask the Financial Accountability Officer to give advice.

I'll give you one off the top of my head: The TDSB, under your watch, was paying \$3,000 to switch an electric circuit. You know that in your own home, if you were to change an electric circuit—unless you could do it yourself—you'd look for the best price and the best quality for an electrician. You'd do that in your home,

but Premier, when it comes to taxpayers' dollars, why don't you do the sane, sensible thing? Why do you lock into a contract that costs \$3,000 for something that should be 10 times less expensive and shows respect for the taxpayer in this great province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that we have already adopted 60% of the recommendations that Mr. Drummond put forward.

I want to talk about our plan, because the Leader of the Opposition is engaging in what really is magical thinking because there are no specifics about how he would move forward, except we know there would be deep cuts and slashes to programs across government and there would be a laying-off of thousands of teachers and thousands of people who work in the health care sector. What we're saying is that we believe that this is a time that we need to invest in infrastructure. We need to invest in roads and bridges and in transit across the province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We believe that skills and training is an area where there needs to be support. We need to make sure that all of the young people in this room today have the opportunities to develop the skills that they need to take part in the 21st century. Those are the kinds of investments that we're making. We think they should come along with us.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier on the same topic: Let me give you another example that Doug Holyday's bill would fix and why I think that you should support Mr. Holyday's bill. I think it's sensible. It's proven. It's working everywhere else, but for some reason you're standing in the way here in the province of Ontario.

Again, under your leadership, the Toronto District School Board, because they're locked into a particular contract with a government union, paid \$143 to install a pencil sharpener. If you were to go to Staples today, that same pencil sharpener would cost you \$20.

1050

So I ask you again, Premier: Why are you forcing taxpayers to pay \$143 for something that should cost \$20 maximum?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Leader of the Opposition is aware, or I assume he's aware, that the Toronto District School Board is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

As soon as I sit down, the next person who decides to jump when there's quiet—I'll get you too.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My understanding is that the Toronto District School Board is moving to address these issues where there was a contract in place that was not reasonable, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's important to understand that at the base of this question that the Leader of the Opposition is asking is an attack on organized labour. That's actually at the root of it, because this right-to-work legislation that he has proposed that really is at the heart of his notion about where the economy should go is an attack on organized labour. It's an attack on the gains that organized labour has made over decades, and, in fact, would drive our workforce to the bottom. That's where he wants to go. We're not going to go there with him, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't understand, Speaker, why the Premier is not supporting such a simple, proven concept. Everywhere else it has been tried, it has saved anywhere from 15% to 30% for the taxpayer.

Let me take this back to the big picture of why this is important. Not only does it then improve the quality of services, but it means we have more money to invest in maybe that new drug to help treat Parkinson's; to help treat cancer; money that we can actually use to balance the books. When we send that signal that we actually have our fiscal house in order, we get new investment, more jobs in our province. That means the young people here today for the model Parliament can find their future here in the province of Ontario, not out in Alberta or British Columbia.

Premier, I've given you two examples. I've got a whole list. I can go on and on, but I don't understand why you don't just give me yes for an answer. It's a sensible bill; it's proven; it's thoughtful. It's about time we made this happen in our province.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I say, I have not seen the piece of legislation. I'm happy to read it and to look at it. But, Mr. Speaker, if there's anything specific in it, I'm happy to look at that.

Again, this is a savings question, and I pointed out that yesterday we announced retiree benefit changes. I will just say, Mr. Speaker, and correct my record, that it's \$1.2-billion savings over the next five years.

My hope is that the Leader of the Opposition would see that that's the kind of move that makes sense. That's the kind of work that we have been doing and we will continue to do. Then he would understand that investing in the future, investing in transit and roads and bridges across the province, investing in skills training for young people, making sure that our young people have opportunities, as they are getting in the youth employment strategy, for placements and job opportunities—that's the kind of work that is necessary right now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, Premier, I don't think it's standing up for taxpayers when you're paying 10 times the cost for a pencil sharpener. Imagine the costs across government.

The Auditor General looked at your own spending in ServiceOntario, for example, and found that those that were in managed competition for ServiceOntario were three times cheaper than those that were government-run.

It seems eminently sensible. To me, that sends a signal that Ontario is open for business, for job creation again.

I'm on the side of taxpayers on this and I'm on the side of the young people who actually want to find a future in the province of Ontario. The problem I think with you is, you're on the side of the special interests who are getting rich off of these fat contracts. I guess the only reason why you can't give me a yes or no is that you've got to call Pat Dillon and the Working Families coalition and get their permission. Why are you on the side of special interests? Why don't you stand up for taxpayers, get our fiscal house in order and make Ontario open for investment and jobs again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm on the side of mothers and fathers and grandfathers and grandmothers across this province who want to make sure that their children have the opportunities that they need. I'm on the side of aunts and uncles who are taking their nieces and nephews to school, who are helping families get to school. They need transit. They need transportation opportunities to be able to help their families get to work and get back from work.

I'm on the side of young people who want a good start in life. There are already 7,600 young people who have had an opportunity through our youth employment strategy, Mr. Speaker. I'm on the side of those kids who want a future. I'm on the side of middle class families who want retirement security. That's who I'm on the side of.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. I am sending the Ontario Liberal platform for 2011 across to the Premier. These are the commitments that the Premier, as a candidate and campaign co-chair, took to the people when seeking support to sit here in this Legislature. Can the Premier tell me, Speaker, on which page the plan for new tolls, taxes and fees is?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I'm happy to have this question. But I really have to say that it is amazing to me that the leader of the third party continues to dissemble on her position in terms of building transit in this province, Mr. Speaker, and investing in infrastructure. It's beyond me how the leader of the third party can actually believe that this is not a moment in our history when we need those kinds of investments, when people need those kinds of investments.

We know that productivity is lost because we don't have adequate transit in the GTA. We know that northern communities struggle to pay for their infrastructure. We know that those kinds of investments are necessary. So I

would have thought that, of all the people on the other side of the floor, the leader of the third party would have been a champion for those kinds of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

I did get a chance to understand one of the words that the Premier said, and I would ask to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I would ask the Premier to withdraw.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question was not answered. I thought the Premier should know that it's not there. In fact, it's exactly the opposite, Speaker: The Premier and her party promised the people that they would not raise taxes on households.

As campaign co-chair, is the Premier aware of the commitments that she was actually elected on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There has been a lot of talk about change in Ontario. I wasn't the Premier in 2011. I'm the Premier now, Mr. Speaker. We have a new plan. That's what this last year has been about: It has been about a new plan. We do have a new plan—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I liked it when you weren't the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Nepean—Carleton might have liked it when I wasn't the leader, but I am the leader now, Mr. Speaker. We have a team that is very, very committed to making those investments. I look to the leader of the third party. I hope she will support us in investments in transit and take a position on building infrastructure across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it is not just the platform. The Liberals went out of their way—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister for Rural Affairs is now warned.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals went out of their way, Speaker, to assure people that they would not raise taxes, tolls or fees. The Liberal leader went further: "Ontario families have made their contributions. We will not [raise taxes]." The party issued a statement saying, "Ontario Liberals have rejected tolls on existing provincial highways and consistently said no to tolls on the DVP or Gardiner Expressway."

Is the Premier ready to admit that she has no mandate to hit families with new taxes, tolls and fees?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have been, as a government, investing in transit since 2003. We're going to continue to do that, and so our position that we need a revenue stream to continue to build transit is completely consistent with what we have been doing.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the leader of the third party that she talk to us about what's going on in her own caucus because there are members who actually agree that this is something that should be looked at. At a public meeting run by Metrolinx, the MPP for Davenport said, "We'll look at revenue tools to make sure they're fair and meet the purpose." At that same meeting, the MPP for Parkdale–High Park promised to cover 50% of the TTC's operational funding and said, "Do we need more money for transportation? Absolutely...." That's the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Those are the values—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier—in fact, the Premier who is the MPP for Don Valley West and who took \$4 billion out of Transit City when she was the minister.

Speaker, families haven't seen a raise in years, and they're watching the bills pile up. But instead of making life more affordable, instead of respecting the middle-class families that sent us here, the Premier is telling hard-working families that they're going to have to pay more—even after promising that she wouldn't. What does the Premier have to say to those families, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party is aware that when I was Minister of Transportation, that \$4 billion stayed in the transit build. It was reconfigured, but it stayed in. It was just a slower flow of dollars. She knows perfectly well that that was the case.

What I would say to families across the province is that we're working very hard to make sure that their lives are better, including investing in transportation infrastructure and transit, and also making changes like changes to the minimum wage, making sure that that minimum wage, as it increases over the coming years, is pegged to index to inflation. We're going to be bringing in legislation to create that indexation. I hope that the leader of the third party and her caucus would support that because I would think that the NDP would think it would be a good idea to have a rational plan for minimum wage going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier says she doesn't want to play Let's Make a Deal, but it seems that she can't deal with the commitments that she made to families in the last election. Once again, Liberals are looking to hit household budgets with new taxes after explicitly promising that they wouldn't.

What does the Premier have to say to those families, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, what I have to say to people across the province is, we are going to make investments in transportation and in infrastructure, including transit. We are going to do that in the fairest way possible. What I would have expected is that we would have had support from, quite frankly, both parties in the opposition, because I know that the PCs understand that having decent infrastructure and having modern infrastructure is important to the economy and actually saves businesses money. I especially would have expected from the NDP that they would have understood that that kind of investment is an investment in the future, and it's critical to the future well-being of people across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier likes to talk about fairness, but this is what people see: New HST loopholes will let corporations write off the HST when they gas up the company car at the same time as Liberals create a brand new gas tax for the moms in Sudbury or Thunder Bay or Brampton—a party that was elected on a promise not to hit household budgets with new taxes, tolls and fees getting ready to do it yet again.

What does the Premier have to say to those moms and those families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I really believe that it's important that a government take leadership on the long-term issues that are going to affect people's lives. If we do nothing as a government but push aside those long-term issues and hold on to short-term quick fixes, then we are not doing our job.

I would say to the leader of the third party that it would be wonderful if we could have a conversation about retirement security, for example, as a long-term issue that is of concern across the country. I have no idea what the leader of the third party believes about what we should do in terms of retirement security.

I believe that having a CPP enhancement would have been the best way forward. The federal government doesn't want to do that. We are going to put together an Ontario plan. I hope that the leader of the third party will see that as worthy of her support, as it will make a huge difference to people into the future.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. Doug, I hope I'm reading you incorrectly, because I seem to sense that you've already taken a position on the bill that I'm about to put forward this afternoon. I want to assure you that this is not to do with politics; it's to do with good management of the government and it's to do with the best use of scarce resources, that being tax dollars.

We found out in municipalities, particularly the municipality of Toronto, that we could save a lot of money if

we would just look outside of the way we're normally providing service. Now, I think that all municipalities should do this, but I think the lead has got to come from the province of Ontario, and that's what the bill is all about. We're asking the Financial Accountability Officer to report to the Legislature on opportunities to use alternate service delivery to save money.

This can be done, and it's only a review of the matter, but it needs your support, and I'm urging you to please support it. A lot of money can be saved if we do this. Will you support it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Government Services is going to want to speak on the specifics. As I said, I haven't read the bill. I know it was just released this morning, and I was in meetings; I have not had a chance to look at the legislation. I don't know what the specifics are.

We are world leaders, as the Minister of Transportation is noting, in our alternative financing procurement. We have developed very strong alternative models of financing and procurement, and we continue to do that work.

I understand the analogy that was made this morning was with the city of Toronto contracting out garbage. Well, we don't pick up garbage. We don't have that function, so I don't know exactly what functions the member is talking about. We'll look at the legislation, and we'll take it from there.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's obvious to me that there are two things happening here. Oh, don't point your finger. Don't you dare point your finger.

We've got two different conversations going on. That's not helpful, and it's also not helpful to do the shout-down stuff that's happening, so let's just bring it down, please.

Supplementary.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Yes, to the Premier: This is also recommended in the Drummond report; it's in the 40% that you haven't done. It's also recommended by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that we take a look at alternate service delivery. It's a good way to reduce the cost of this government. It can be done.

The city of Toronto could save \$35 million contracting out its garbage for the entire city. It should have been done in 2000, but it wasn't done, so that means from 2000 to now—12 years—they've wasted over \$400 million of taxpayers' dollars. At the same time, they come up here to the province, cap in hand, on one knee, begging for money to balance their own budget when they wouldn't do the things that were needed to do it themselves.

Now, I want to put us in the position of being able to balance our own budget, save the money that we can save, provide the service that we need to provide, and do it in the best way. Will you support it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, at first, in passing, I'm surprised that the member, as the critic for the Ministry of Government Services, wouldn't have stood up today and congratulated the government on our move yesterday on retiree benefits, which will save some \$1.2 billion.

I'm not sure where the member has been for the last number of years. I realize he hasn't been in the Legislature, but he would have seen that our government has taken numerous steps to find more creative ways to deliver services to the people of Ontario in an efficient and productive way. But, Mr. Speaker, we have been driven by what makes sense, not by the type of ideology that we've seen from across the way, the type that has led to the let's-have-right-to-work-for-less legislation, privatization.

1110

I'm not prepared today to stand here and take lessons from the party that brought us privatization of the 407 on how government can bring forward these services.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In November of last year, after Cliffs announced it would stop operations in the Ring of Fire, the minister hastily announced the creation of a development corporation. Several NDP attempts for information on this new development corporation were called "premature" by the government. Even the federal government is requesting details that the province just doesn't have.

Last Friday, the ministry announced that it had hired consultant firm Deloitte to set up a development corporation, the same development corporation that had already been announced three months prior. How much is Deloitte getting paid to come up with a project that the Liberal government already announced it had created?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you for the question. May I say, Mr. Speaker, that despite the lack of support that we're getting from the other side of the House, we are making important and significant progress on the Ring of Fire, and may I say that the creation of the development corporation is absolutely key to that.

We recognize that there need to be decisions made related to infrastructure. We know that in terms of the project moving forward, we have got to be able to get the resources out of the Ring of Fire and, obviously, to market. That's why that's so important.

We also, working with our potential partners, certainly including industry, First Nations and potentially the federal government—hopefully—recognize that we want to move forward with the kind of expertise that Deloitte

can provide to us. They have the governance expertise and they have the legal expertise to be able to pull this together in terms of making the decision on infrastructure.

There are other aspects that I do want to speak about, particularly related to how important our work with the First Nations is, and perhaps I'll get to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the minister: For the past three years, the NDP has been calling on the government to take a leadership role in creating a real plan that will benefit job creation in the province. Time and time again, the government kept using rosy press releases on agreements, without facts to back them up. Hiring Deloitte is an admission that the government never had a plan for Ring of Fire development in the first place.

Will this government stop giving out consulting contracts to outside firms and do its job by coming up with a serious plan for Ring of Fire development instead of wasting another five years?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We have spoken so very often, certainly the Premier has and other members of our government, about how important it is to get it right, and indeed it is very important that we get it right. That's why, indeed, I think we're getting support from our industry partners and getting support from many others in terms of the retention of Deloitte being that key to probably pulling the establishment of the development corporation together. It's crucial.

But also on that parallel path are the very important negotiations that are taking place between the province, led by Frank Iacobucci, and by Mr. Rae, representing Matawa First Nations. We're working very hard to bringing that to a position where we can make a more formal announcement of that moving forward. That's crucial to this as well. I know the member knows that.

But in terms of the development corporation, we are moving forward in a very positive way. We're getting support for the work for the development corporation and support for the work that Deloitte will give in terms of the expertise they can provide to us.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. My constituents have raised a number of concerns regarding the previous session. Particularly, they've observed the government's troubles in advancing laws to address the challenges faced by our environment here in Ontario.

Those who care about Ontario's environment were dismayed to watch the Protection of Public Participation Act addressed on five separate occasions over the past nine months without progressing to a vote. Further, the official opposition ate up much of committee time on the Great Lakes Protection Act, allowing only four amendments to be voted on.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please speak to the speed of environmental bills moving through this Legislature?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I do understand the concerns of his constituents. Our government understands that Ontario's environment is always fragile. In order to restore and preserve its beauty and value for the current as well as for future generations, action has to be taken now. Economic and environmental opportunities, I think, are being lost. That's as a result, I think, of political jockeying, which happens in this House from time to time, mainly when I hear the bells ringing and prolonged debates and so on.

I recognize that the Conservative Party has chosen to be against many of these environmental initiatives; that's their business. That's why we're appealing to the New Democratic Party to try to form a green majority, if you will, to pass these four bills. I've directed a letter to my good colleagues, the New Democratic Party, who have been supportive of this legislation, to help us out with this programming motion. I hope they will give it some favourable consideration because I think it would advance the cause of the environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Thank you.

I heard the question, and it was getting desperately close not to being on government policy. The minister was good enough to tight-rope-walk that, but I'm going to ask—and listen carefully to the supplementary—that it's about government policy.

Carry on.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need some quarterbacks.

Mr. John Fraser: Again, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Residents of Ottawa South will be pleased to hear that our government is seeking the support of the third party to work towards the greater cause of protecting Ontario's environment.

It is a shame that the economic and environmental opportunities were lost in the previous session due to political games being played by the official opposition. Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please remind the people of Ontario why we need to pass these important pieces of environmental legislation and how they would ensure a healthier future for our environment and our economy?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's an excellent question. We need these laws to protect the Great Lakes, for example, and that's Bill 6. We have widespread support for the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act from health and environmental groups as well as municipalities. We need to expand recycling. The Waste Reduction Act would, if passed, create new opportunities for business investment and jobs by harnessing the economic value of waste. We need these laws to stop polluters from intimidating community groups who are trying to protect their own neighbourhoods.

Again, I respect the fact that the Conservative Party has decided to be against most of these environmental laws—one not, but most of them. That is why I am asking all members of the House, including my colleagues in the New Democratic Party who have spoken in

favour of these bills in the House and in committee, to work with us. We want to get these bills moving so we can continue our consultation with the stakeholders and provide them with the opportunity to present their advice and recommendations to all members of committee. That's the way the House should work, and I hope that's going to be the case.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. During the recent ice storm and the power outage, it was clear that the province's emergency management preparedness plan was either ignored or it was lacking, or perhaps it was both. Whether it was the disregard of basic communications channels—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. All right. Let's go to the people now.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Whether it was a disregard for basic communication channels of operation to opposition MPPs or the glaring reality that politics, not progress, was behind the giveaway gift card fiasco, it was clear that this government put postal-code politics ahead of plans for Ontarians. In the aftermath of the ice storm, the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus asked for a select committee to study the province's emergency preparedness protocol for quicker response in the future. I'm sending my page over with our direct request to the government House leader as well as our proposal, and I would ask that the Premier stand in her place and agree with that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, having met every day during the ice storm with the leadership from Emergency Management Ontario and Hydro One, I know that they were on the ground in every community that was struck by the ice storm and they were working hard to make sure that all of those lines were reconnected and that people got their power back. They did it around the clock. There were workers on the ground. It was complicated. It was complicated because of the tree coverage. It was complicated because of the breadth of the storm, but the fact is that those workers were on the ground, and their leadership was engaged across government to make sure that every resource, whether there was an emergency declared or not—and the member opposite knows that there were not emergencies declared except in one jurisdiction. Across the board in every jurisdiction, every resource was available to communities.

Interjection.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will come to order.

Carry on.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The workers' leadership is not in question. It is your leadership that is in question. This wasn't just a Toronto issue. Opposition members of the

Legislature, even from Toronto, never received verbal briefings from you, your energy minister or anyone over there. You chose to give out gift cards in the city of Toronto, but not to opposition areas until much later in the day. Your own energy minister was missing in action. And I will say this, Minister: You showed leadership—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to say it again, just to make sure you heard it: The Minister of Education will come to order. And then the member from Renfrew is prepared to receive another one; I will give it to him, but he's on the edge.

Please finish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: When the Minister of Energy was mayor of Ottawa and regional chair, he actually displayed leadership in a time of crisis. I don't know what has changed with him. Perhaps he's now a lapdog for this government.

But what is unacceptable was their postal-code politics that were played in the city of Toronto, in seats that they could win, at the expense of people in other affected areas.

Let me ask the Premier this one more time: Will you call the select committee? Will you put progress before politics?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really have to say that I honestly believe that this is a shameful question, because the fact is that there were people working across the province. The member opposite knows perfectly well that the gift card program, which was a small part of our attempt to offer some support, was offered in every community. Every municipality that was affected was offered it, and they took it up, and the member opposite knows that. My understanding is that the member for Nepean—Carleton's office was offered a briefing, and that was declined.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I am looking for some decorum. I resent that, when I do get control and we do get calm, somebody uses it as an opportunity to start it again.

You have 10 seconds.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I said that it was my understanding. If that's not the case, then we will look into that. There are two reviews that are happening as a part of the response to the ice storm. There's the after-action report and the supply chain review. It—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Sant   et des Soins de longue dur  e.

Seventy-two-year-old Kelemua Esayase is a very sick woman. She, like 600 other people seeking care at Trillium Health Group in Toronto, had her CT scan read incorrectly by a radiologist. Due to this error, Mrs. Esayase's cancer was not diagnosed, and the treatment was not provided. This hospital has admitted to Mrs. Esayase that they made a mistake, that they made an error.

Does the minister think that it is sufficient for the hospital to admit that they've made a mistake, or do they have a responsibility to help and care for patients like Mrs. Esayase who have suffered because of these errors?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Of course, I am prohibited from speaking about individual cases, but I can assure you that all individuals with urgent care needs are treated in our hospitals, regardless of their coverage. That is an obligation under the Public Hospitals Act, that people are treated. Hospitals cannot refuse to treat or admit an individual if the refusal would thereby endanger the person's life, regardless of the individual's residency or insurance status. So, Speaker, this, of course, is an issue that I think everyone is concerned about and is investigating what has happened in this particular situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, after months of misdiagnosis, Mrs. Esayase's ovarian cancer was finally caught but at an advanced stage. Then the worst happened: Surgeons refused to operate.

The family feels abandoned by the health care system and by the hospital. They feel that their mother is paying with her life for their mistakes.

Speaker, the minister must hold the hospital accountable. She has to make sure that they take responsibility for their mistakes and the way they impact patients. When will the minister do her job and ensure that hospitals do their part to help people affected like Mrs. Esayase?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I can assure you that Trillium Health Partners is actively working with the patient and the family to address their concerns. That work is ongoing. I can also tell you that Cancer Care Ontario has put in place evidence-based protocols for determining when patients need chemotherapy or surgery. Ultimately, physicians are responsible for making health care decisions in consultation with patients and their families.

Speaker, I can assure you that people who work in health care in the province of Ontario are as fine a group of people as we could find anywhere on earth. They are dedicated to providing the highest possible quality of care to patients, and if something does go wrong, they are the first to look at that and say, "What can we do to make sure this does not happen again?"

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Transports et de l'Infrastructure, the Honourable

Glen Murray. Minister, I'd just like to first of all take this opportunity publicly to thank you for taking time recently to visit my own riding of Etobicoke North to make an important announcement which, of course, will be a benefit to my constituents.

Of course, I'm well aware of how our government is making record investments in public transit, and these will have echoing and recurring benefits for all of my residents. My constituents rely on GO trains and buses to get to and from work and school, as well as to transport family, friends and visitors to our vibrant community. The GO system helps to reduce congestion on the roads and helps to keep our air clean.

Minister, I would ask you to please inform this House, and through this chamber, as well my own residents, about some of the details of the transit investment that we recently announced together.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend from Etobicoke North parce qu'il parle français de temps en temps ici, ce qui est très important, but more importantly because he is a huge advocate for transit. He has fought very hard for the people in Etobicoke North to see some very basic improvements.

What we're seeing right now at the Etobicoke North station is an expansion of the platform so it can handle 12-car trains. Very importantly, the station is being rebuilt so it can be wheelchair accessible, which is a huge priority for us, to ensure that we are meeting our commitments to universal accessibility. We're improving the bus loop, and, as for many Ontarians, heated shelters, which, this winter, is a particular gift. Also, in communities where people use their cars within those communities, we are adding a 200-lot parking garage, Mr. Speaker—a very big improvement for the people of Etobicoke.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister. I'd like to, of course, formally and officially thank you for the update and the upgrade to the Etobicoke North GO station.

I know my community continues to benefit from the ongoing investments that our government is making, whether we're talking about health care, community safety or, in this case, transportation and infrastructure.

1130

Nevertheless, adding to the list of troubling policy commitments that the honourable Leader of the Opposition is making, I was a little bit dismayed to learn that he might halt infrastructure spending for communities like mine.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Transportation, would the minister please inform this House: What are some of the investments that we're making in communities across Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of the areas that we don't talk a lot about is our highway program, which is almost \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker. We're working right now on twinning highways across northern Ontario. The Windsor-Essex parkway now—not only has it been a success in the sense that we're building one of the most important trade routes, but it has actually provoked the construction

of the new presidential bridge—the most important trade corridor.

But, Mr. Speaker, to maintain economic growth and jobs, we have to spend 5% of our GDP on infrastructure. Anything less would mean a loss of jobs and competitiveness. We're very proud that after 30 years of less than one quarter of 1% being spent by this government, we are now at 2% of GDP, or about \$13 billion.

The municipalities are doing their job. They've reached the 1% goal of GDP. The federal government, Mr. Flaherty—he sat in this House as a finance minister. I commend him; he has been incredibly consistent. He has now got the federal government down to somewhere between a quarter and a half of GDP, which will kill jobs and undermine the future of our economy.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, you know by now that your outdated ratio system is costing tens of thousands of Ontario citizens, citizens like these young men and women in the audience here today, an opportunity of a good career in the trades. You must surely know that by now. Our young people are taking their apprenticeships in BC and Alberta while you dither and allow the Ontario College of Trades to become a new barrier for job creation and economic growth right here in this province. You brag about seeing more women and more aboriginals enter the trades, yet they are the first to be subjected to your three-to-one ratio system that is costing them valuable opportunities.

When, Minister, can we expect to see you get on the side of young men and women and support the position of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and support a one-to-one ratio system here in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: With all of these young people here today, what a great opportunity for me to have to smoke out the party opposite on their position when it comes to ratios. I want to say to the young people—through you, Mr. Speaker—here today that when that party was in office, in eight years, they reduced apprenticeship trade ratios by zero. The NDP, in all of their years in office, had one. In our years of office, before the College of Trades got put in place, we did eight reductions—eight times more than the NDP. I can't do the math because they did zero. Since the College of Trades has been up and running, they've done 14 in less than a year. So we've done 22 trade ratio reductions, compared to zero that you did when you were in office. I think that's a pretty darn good track record. I think that people in this audience can add a lot better than you can.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the same boring and uninformed message that you have been subjected to for months. The fact of the matter is that

only two trades have been approved by your cabinet: floor covering installer and cement finisher. The other 22 are a joke. You've never approved anything—nothing you've approved. And just yesterday, your Ontario College of Trades regulation review committee had an emergency meeting to pass regulations for the 22 trades that you have been saying are already passed. That was following a letter to Ron Johnson by the Ontario home builders, so you went right into panic mode.

We already know that the ratio review teams are too biased to go to a one-to-one ratio, but at least, Minister, when will you finally get cabinet approval to change some of the ratios when, in fact, you could have done this earlier this year? You could have done it without even forming the Ontario College of Trades. You could have done it yourself, if you want to brag about that. We don't need the Ontario College of Trades. Let's abolish it once and forever. Get rid of this mess.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I think if the member really cared about the people in the audience here today and if he cared about young apprentices, he would want to support the College of Trades because the College of Trades has a mandate to promote skilled trades with our young people. It has a mandate to provide skilled tradespeople with the ability to govern themselves.

What he's not saying to the young people here today is he wants to go back to the days when politicians ran the skilled trades, back in the Tory days when we had zero trade ratio changes.

Young people in this province don't want to go back to Mike Harris. Young people want to move forward with a Liberal government that's going to continue to grow the skilled trades, going to continue to help young people get into the skilled trades. That's what the College of Trades is going to do.

Stop the politics. Start standing up for the young people of this province.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety.

Speaker, in the wake of the horrendous retirement home fire in L'Isle-Verte, Quebec, on January 23, the Minister of Health was quoted as saying on CBC, "One thing she wants to do is go back and look at accelerating the mandatory installation of the sprinklers."

"Sprinklers are being installed in older long-term-care homes operated by the Ministry of Health as it rebuilds its facilities, but that program is scheduled to last until 2025."

Speaker, the Minister of Health says she'll accelerate implementation in government care facilities, but can the minister explain if the government has a plan for

protecting the vulnerable people in our province who live in the other facilities—and when?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much for this question. I know that the Minister of Health would like to answer the second question.

First of all, what happened in L'Isle-Verte, Quebec, is very, very unfortunate. My heart goes out to the families who lost loved ones there.

We are very proud to be the first province to make sprinklers mandatory in existing retirement homes and long-term-care facilities. It was not an easy process, but we did it with everybody at the table. I want to take this opportunity today, Mr. Speaker, to thank all of those who came to the table and were willing to compromise to make sure that we achieved this very important milestone in public safety. Let me say again that we are the only government in the country to do this.

We'll continue to make sure that our seniors are safe in their facilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs worked on the issue for years with very slow success. From the time I raised this issue until the 2013 consultation, six seniors lost their lives in retirement home fires, while this minister did nothing. Those deaths didn't inspire her to get moving more quickly on the issue, but sadly it seems to have taken the recent tragedy to get her colleague moving on it. Even in the wake of the comments by her colleague, this minister has done nothing to address the implementation periods for the regulations passed by this cabinet last spring.

Will this minister commit to providing an update this week on the status of the implementation of the new regulations, and provide this Legislature with an accelerated timeline for each part of the regulations, to protect the people of this province?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Any time there is a tragedy like we saw in L'Isle-Verte, of course we all look to see what lessons can be learned, and that's exactly what we are doing.

I think it's important to note that 70% of our long-term-care homes do have sprinklers. The remaining 30% are slated for redevelopment, to bring them up to today's standards, which of course will include sprinklers.

It is important to note that it's not only about sprinklers when it comes to fire safety, Speaker. We have taken significant steps to make sure that all of our residents are as safe as can be. In fact, we've provided \$20 million to support long-term-care homes to come up to code, to develop evacuation plans, to develop safety plans, enhance fire protection equipment, fire safety training for staff. All of our long-term-care homes must, and do, have a comprehensive fire safety plan.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

In Ontario, we have some of the best and brightest young minds. What is encouraging is that many of them want to give back to their community. They're talented, creative and driven.

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In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, I know that many of the young people, like Kevin Vuong, George Xu, Alice Wang, Akehil Johnson and Tamara Myazada, are not afraid to step up in terms of a challenge and be part of the solution. Like many young people in Ontario, they need our help. They need mentorship. They need guidance to realize their full potential.

In fall 2013, our government announced new funding for youth programs at MaRS Discovery District. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Children and Youth Services tell the House what is included in the curriculum of this program and tell us more about the status of this initiative?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for this very important question today. The member is right: Ontario has many exceptional, globally minded youth who are passionate about their communities and about making a difference in their communities. In fact, there are a number of them with us here today.

We recognize that for them to realize their potential and succeed, they need to build the right skills, have access to the right resources and make the right connections. That's why I'm proud that our government is investing in the MaRS Discovery District's Studio Y Ontario social impact and youth leadership academy, with their first group of cohorts with us today. Fellows at Studio Y will take part in an intensive skills development curriculum. It will include training in leadership, project management, entrepreneurship, community-building and governance.

In January, I had the opportunity to meet the first cohort, and I was amazed by their positive energy. These promising youth have the drive, determination and talent to become leaders capable of making positive social change in Ontario for years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Soo Wong: I thank the minister for that response. I'm pleased to hear that the Studio Y program at MaRS is up and running. It consists of a promising group of young people. The skills that these young people will develop at MaRS will undoubtedly help them have an impact in the community. When we empower young people with skills and talents, they will also make our province more prosperous and fair, and it will benefit all of us.

Minister, I understand that in January, during your tour, you made a challenge to the Studio Y cohort. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share with the House the challenge that she issued to youth in Ontario?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you again. Yes. As I indicated, the program focuses on community-building and good governance. I wanted to provide the fellows with an opportunity to get involved in shaping actual public policy.

As we all know, one of the programs in my ministry currently is the student nutrition program, a program that provides close to 700,000 children each year with nutritious food every day. Some of the agencies that deliver this program have identified challenges in effectively purchasing, storing and distributing program food. So I issued a challenge to the group, and this is the challenge: to apply their creativity to explore and design innovative solutions to generate greater efficiencies in food purchase, distribution and storage, to maximize the impact of the program.

Their work will help us to better deliver a great program in schools. I look forward to hearing about their progress and their final recommendations at the end.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, it has been three months since you announced plans for a Ring of Fire development corporation. Since then, it has become increasingly clear that your November announcement was just a last-ditch effort to provide cover for Cliffs' decision to pull out of the Ring of Fire. Now your recent decision to enlist third party advice has all the makings of another empty press release from a government desperate for a good-news story.

On the Ring of Fire, your government is big on announcements but very light on specifics. So, Minister, please answer my simple question: Is your much-talked-about Ring of Fire development corporation even incorporated?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Listen: We are making very significant progress on the Ring of Fire project. One of the important aspects of that is indeed the creation of the development corporation. We're working very closely with our many potential partners. We're working very closely now with—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We're working with their strong support in terms of the retention of Deloitte, which has the expertise in governance and putting together corporations such as this, so we're going to continue to work with them.

What we would like to see would be more support, may I say, from the members on the opposite side of the House—perhaps support very directly connected to the federal government. We have made it very clear that we are prepared to make a very significant investment in the Ring of Fire, recognizing how important the infrastructure aspects are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —and it would be great to have the federal government on side. The Premier had a meeting with the Prime Minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: I didn't hear an answer to my question about whether the development corporation is incorporated, despite the announcement a few months ago. I find it hard to imagine how anybody could trust your government on this file.

We're still waiting for the "Thousands of Jobs Coming to Northern Ontario" promised in your government press release dated May 9, 2012. Here we are two years later, and still no jobs.

Now your plan is to hire a consultant to provide advice, and we've watched as your government ignored taxpayer-funded expert advice in the past. It's no secret that establishing a transportation link is critical to the project. Minister, why has your government stalled in the past two years on creating reliable access to the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We have made it so very, very clear how important it is to get this project right, and we're determined to get it right. We're getting the kind of support that we would like to have in terms of the formation of the development corporation from our partners, a very good, positive response about the announcement and about the retention of a company such as Deloitte with the expertise they have.

But it's also very important that we get it right in terms of the work we're doing with First Nations. Again, it would be great to have your support in that regard. Clearly, the work that we are doing with the Matawa First Nations, with our negotiator, Mr. Iacobucci, Mr. Rae representing Matawa, is absolutely vital because we need their support. We're on a parallel path.

This project is one that we all need to be very keen on working together on. It's a complex one. The progress is being made in a very, very significant way, and again, it would be wonderful to have your support to persuade the federal government to recognize how important it is that they make a substantial contribution to this project as well.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to correct my record. The question that was asked by the member for Nepean–Carleton: The Minister of Energy's office did offer a briefing on December 24 to the member. Her office replied six days later and did not take up the offer. Energy did provide updates to critics and, in fact, briefed the member for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. There is a fine line between correcting one's record and adding extra comments. I will take that as an actual corrected record. However, having said that, I'm not privy to the last piece that you had said.

I did see the member from Nepean–Carleton rise on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. I do appreciate the press release that the Minister of Energy's office sent to me. I could have found it on the website, however.

VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Kersti Landra and Rheanne Perry, two members of model Parliament, from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Welcome to Melissa Kargiannakis from London, Ontario, who has joined us today, and I'm sure learned a lot.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to introduce Joshua Vito and Victoria Yang, also from Kitchener–Waterloo, for the model Parliament.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome Katherine Hopf and Ana Staffen from my riding of Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to note and introduce the creator of Gananoque ale, who is here all the way from Gananoque, Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to welcome members from my riding who are participating in the model Parliament: Gurpreet Kaur Badesha, as well as Andrew Wilson. Please join me in welcoming them to the assembly today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GREEN ENERGY ACT

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure for me to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party to recommit to our position to scrap the Green Energy Act, once elected. That means we would expeditiously move to remove subsidies on wind and solar. We would restore locally based decision-making and we would ensure that there was a moratorium placed on any future wind developments until there are proper environmental and health effect studies assessed.

The Green Energy Act has been disastrous for rural Ontario, but it has also been disastrous for anybody paying a hydro bill in Ontario today. They are putting up almost \$22 billion to pay for this green energy scheme. It is unfortunate that there are people out there today trying to distort the Ontario Progressive Conservative position on wind energy for their own political gain because too many people in Ontario, like Esther Wrightman, rely on

the Progressive Conservative Party to form a government so that we'll be able to fight this terrible plan and repeal it.

Esther, it's important to note, is being sued by a company that she stood up against. They're called NextEra. Esther called them "NEXTeror," so they are suing this young mother for money she does not have because she took a stand in her community.

Speaker, I say this: The Progressive Conservative Party stands with Esther, folks like her, and for Ontario.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The labour minister needs to act to help resolve the six-month-long strike by 120 members of United Steelworkers at the Crown Holdings plant in Toronto. It is not enough to simply have a mediator involved.

Steelworkers have visited with Liberal MPPs because most of the members live in their ridings. These legislators promised to ask the labour minister to intervene. The Steelworkers also received a letter from Premier Wynne stating she would ask the minister to inquire. To date, the striking members have heard nothing from the minister.

This is no ordinary strike. It reflects what is wrong with our labour laws. This Philadelphia-based multinational forced these workers on strike soon after doubling its profits and giving the Toronto workers an award for their outstanding performance. But Crown's real reward was to demand a permanent wage cut of \$9 per hour for new and younger workers, which would doom them to a life of poverty. The Steelworker members are striking not just for themselves but for the next generation and to prevent Canada from becoming a low-wage country. They are real heroes.

Crown is highly profitable and does not need these cuts. It forced this strike because it can. The CEO earns \$6,000 per hour. This is a David-versus-Goliath fight and reflects an extraordinary abuse of human and labour rights. It requires the government to take sides, speak out and use its full power to stand up for Ontario workers.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Today I'm honoured to rise to speak about the importance of Black History Month as a member of the black community myself and as someone who has had her own personal and professional growth rooted in the black community.

Every February, we celebrate the contributions made by those who came before us. We remember their bravery and their leadership during the most difficult of times. In working to gain equality for all—political, social and economic—Ontario and Canada have been enriched and strengthened by these contributions. We would not be the province or the country we are today had it not been for the trailblazers in the black community.

I was so pleased to see the cover of Toronto Press Today. One of the gentlemen, Judge Stanley Grizzle, is on the cover. I remember, when I was in high school, I was the student council president and had the honour of introducing him to my student body.

We continue to celebrate the history of the black community in Canada, and this ensures that we as a province continue to uphold the ideals of equality for all people regardless of race, gender and/or creed.

I'm proud to stand behind a Premier and a government that is committed to providing opportunities to all, to allow every Ontarian to reach their full potential and consistently prove that as one Ontario, our diversity and our acceptance of all people is our greatest strength.

DARA HOWELL

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to recognize a truly world-class athlete from my riding. I'd like to congratulate Dara Howell on winning the first-ever gold medal awarded in women's slopestyle skiing at the Winter Olympics that are currently being held in Sochi, Russia.

Dara grew up in the town of Huntsville, specifically at Pow Wow Point Lodge in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I have great memories of skiing at Hidden Valley Highlands and seeing her family, the Howell family—Doug and Dee, her parents, the kids, and grandparents Jack and Jacquie—there enjoying skiing. I know they are a big part of her success and provided all kinds of support for Dara.

Dara joins an elite group of athletes from Parry Sound-Muskoka who have competed in the Olympics. Downhill skier Liisa Savijarvi and sledge hockey player Graeme Murray come to mind.

The outpouring of community support and plans for what I'm sure will be a tremendous homecoming show how we have all been able to share in her victory. To accomplish this feat at only 19 years of age is truly remarkable. Dara has made not only Parry Sound-Muskoka proud but the entire country proud.

Congratulations, Dara.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I stand because I am so proud and privileged to represent many Ukrainian Canadians in my riding. I'm also proud that I'm the only member of provincial Parliament that got to co-author two bills: one, the Ukrainian Heritage Day Act, and also the Holodomor act, which declared the Holodomor a genocide.

But I stand in great consternation and dismay, Mr. Speaker, because of the situations unfolding in Ukraine, particularly in Kiev, where we now have news that over 28 people have been killed.

I stand calling on the federal government to do more than it has, to do more than express their concern, to do more than offer help to the protesters, whose civil rights have been completely disregarded. We are calling upon

the federal government to actually impose targeted sanctions against those in the government in Ukraine who are responsible for disregarding those human rights.

My thoughts and prayers go out to all Ukrainian Canadians who may have relatives still in Ukraine, and my prayers and thoughts go out to those who are in the streets fighting for democracy and human rights, in Kiev and throughout Ukraine.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Today I feel very privileged as I join my special guests to launch a new book called Violence Against Women—All Pervading. I have a copy here, and it's my understanding that all 107 MPPs will be getting a copy of this.

In the members' gallery this afternoon we have, from the Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women, Sunder Singh, Susmita Vaidya, Vinod Sharma and Joh Mourra; from Gujarat Express, Amit Bhatt; and Ajit Jain, a veteran Indo-Canadian journalist, who edited the book. If you could please rise so we can recognize you.

Violence Against Women—All Pervading has been funded by the Toronto-based Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women and the Toronto Police Services Board. It features views of top academics, social activists and political leaders and is a cross-cultural study of violence against women.

It is a follow-up of a symposium held in Toronto in the aftermath of the shocking December 16, 2012, gang rape in Delhi. The book is dedicated to the victim of this incident. Although the victim is of Indian origin, the book actually takes pains—one of the main themes of the book is to point out that violence against women is not country-specific. In fact, the book cites UN studies that show that one in three women are, at least once in their lifetime, raped, brutalized or assaulted. On average, every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner.

I thank you so very much for bringing out this book.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my honour to rise today to acknowledge Black History Month. Black History Month celebrates the many achievements and struggles of black Canadians past and present.

My riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex was the setting of some of the most significant sites in this history, including many stops on the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes and safe houses used by 19th-century slaves in the United States to escape to Canada and free states. One estimate suggests that by 1850, up to 100,000 slaves had escaped via the Underground Railroad.

Chatham-Kent was a key destination for freedom seekers, as this region, including North and South Buxton, was home to some of the most successful black

settlements and the greatest populace of former slaves in Canada. Original structures, artifacts and memoirs preserve this heritage throughout my riding. Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site commemorates the life of the Reverend Josiah Henson. Recognized for his contributions to the abolition movement and his work in the Underground Railroad, Henson rose to international fame after Harriet Beecher Stowe acknowledged his memoirs as a source of her anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom's Cabin.

The stories of slaves who established roots in our community are displayed at the exhibit Black Mecca: The Stories of Black Community. The exhibit highlights both struggles and achievements of black Canadians during their initial settlement in Chatham, the civil rights movement and modern times.

In conclusion, on Black History Month, let's reflect on the challenges faced by the generations of black Ontarians and all those who have been forced to endure and overcome. It is my sincere hope that, one day, stories of injustice and discrimination are a distant memory.

Thank you for allowing me to continue, Speaker.

VAUGHAN IN MOTION TO CURE CANCER

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to rise today and update the House regarding a wonderful event that happened in my community of Vaughan earlier this month. Saturday, February 8, marked the date for the annual Vaughan in Motion Hollywood Gala to Cure Cancer.

Vaughan in Motion is a not-for-profit organization that supports cancer patients and their families living in my community. Their efforts raise money for programs and equipment that aid in the prevention, early detection and treatment of all forms of cancer.

This organization is run entirely by a group of hard-working volunteers from Vaughan. These individuals work tirelessly to organize a number of great events in addition to the gala, including the annual five-kilometre walk to cure cancer, as well as a golf tournament.

I was very happy to attend the Hollywood Gala on the 8th and speak briefly to those in attendance regarding the Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital. The successful delivery of this hospital is an important objective for my community. I was pleased to have the opportunity to assure those in attendance that the Vaughan hospital is on track for tendering later this year, in September.

The Hollywood Gala was an absolute success. Over their many years of fundraising, Vaughan in Motion has raised close to \$1 million in total for cancer patients and their families, a truly remarkable feat for a group of individuals who call themselves everyday people trying to make a difference. And they certainly do, Speaker. Led by co-founders Peter Badali and Dr. Greg D'Orio, this group has had a tremendous impact on my community, and I want to sincerely thank them for their hard work, their commitment and their dedication.

OLYMPICS TRIBUTE

Mrs. Jane McKenna: People across Ontario have been proudly cheering on our top athletes competing in the Winter Olympics. Every community's enthusiasm takes a special form. In my riding of Burlington over the weekend, around a dozen parents and their children took part in a unique Olympic tribute to the winter games. The event took place at the home of the Taylor family in Aldershot and along the frozen shoreline of Burlington Bay.

This fabulous Olympic party was the brainchild of seven-year-old Kira Taylor, who was inspired by her father's love of the event. What started as an expression of one family's passion for sports was taken up in spirit by the participants, who split into teams representing the countries where their families were from: Canada, United States, Ireland, the Netherlands and South Korea. There was a mini-rink constructed, a speed-skating track shaped after the Olympic rings, a leader board, flags, athlete credentials, press badges and VIP passes.

Starting the day's festivities was a bobsled event, possibly a nod to Burlington bobsledders Jesse Lumsden and Tim Randall, currently competing over in Sochi.

Naturally, there was a torch-lighting ceremony to start the event with the proper sense of Olympic spirit, medals for the participants, and world-class winter memories for all.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Holyday moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports concerning alternative service delivery of public services / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2013 sur le directeur de la responsabilité financière en ce qui concerne les rapports portant sur la mise en place d'autres modes de prestation des services publics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The table is complete. The member for a short statement?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: I guess I'm really excited, Mr. Speaker. I got up a little early.

I'm excited to bring forward a bill that amends the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013, to require that the Financial Accountability Officer report to the assembly regarding areas of public service delivery in which alternative service delivery may result in the same quality or better quality of service at a lower cost. Certain public sector service areas shall not be reported on.

In making the report, the officer is required to consult with the private sector to assess the potential cost savings and potential service disruptions resulting from alternative service delivery. Alternative service delivery is defined as the delivery of public services by persons or entities other than the government or a public sector organization. Thank you very much for your attention.

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION
EN ONTARIO

Mr. Coteau moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 161, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to start by acknowledging and recognizing the hard work of the staff from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration who are here with us today, under the leadership of the deputy minister, who is with us today.

I rise today to pay tribute to our province's success as a beacon for immigrants from around the world and to propose legislation that speaks to the importance of immigration to Ontario's future.

Our province has welcomed and relied upon immigrants from its earliest beginning and continues to do so today. With the exception of our aboriginal population, everyone in this province has an immigrant past. Some have been here for as little as two weeks and some families can trace their roots back 200 years, but they're all drawn to this province by the search for fairness, opportunity and success. Together, Ontario's aboriginal and immigrant populations have made our province what it is today.

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Our province is a beacon of hope, trust, freedom and opportunity, with strong pillars in place to give people the tools and prospects to achieve their goals. Ontario is a province where we look after each other. It's a province where we work with one another to create great public

education, reliable health care systems, dedicated volunteers and a strong economy.

Ontario is a place where our basic right to be free from discrimination is enshrined and protected in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Here, it doesn't matter where you come from, how much money you have in the bank, the colour of your skin, your gender, your sexual orientation or your personal religious views. What does matter is that if one works hard in this province, they will be able to build a successful life for themselves and their family. This is the Ontario that we're proud of, a place where people know they are protected and provided with countless opportunities.

Over the next 25 years, immigration is expected to be Ontario's major source of labour market growth. One study forecasts that there will be 2.5 million job openings in the province over the next 10 years, and the majority of them are going to be highly skilled.

As we all know, an important part of Ontario's economy is trade. The more we trade, the more jobs we create. Newcomers can help us tap into new markets by leveraging their cultural knowledge, their language expertise, and their personal networks.

Yet as immigration becomes more essential to our economic success, our share of newcomers in Canada is declining. More critically for our prosperity, Ontario's share of economic-class immigrants is 50%, much lower than the 70% average that other provinces have. Saskatchewan and Manitoba, for example, have economic-class immigrant shares of 87% and 77% respectively. Ontario must now act to ensure that immigrants around the world continue to bring their skills and their talents here to our province. Now is the time for our province to chart its own course and bring forward a new vision for immigration.

Sixteen months ago, our government announced Ontario's first immigration strategy to help attract more skilled immigrants and their families here to our province. Later today, we are proud to be taking the next step by introducing the Ontario Immigration Act. If passed, the act would build on our progress and make Ontario only the second province or territory here in our country to have its own immigration legislation. The proposed legislation would enable Ontario to attract more highly skilled immigrants to help meet our future labour market needs and support economic growth. It would increase transparency and information-sharing to improve immigrant selection, and it would also strengthen Ontario's successful Provincial Nominee Program. The program gives employers and investors the opportunity to recruit and retain skilled foreign workers, including international students. We know that 98% of provincial nominees remain here in our province and continue to work in our labour market. We need to maximize this program's value to help our economy.

I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity that Ontario has provided me and my family. As an immigrant, this province has provided me with a wonderful opportunity to obtain a world-class education and to find work here in

this province, to represent this province, and to start a family of my own. I love Ontario and what it has to offer, and I believe wholeheartedly that much of Ontario's future, like its past, will rely on new generations of immigrants like me who will come here to find success.

Building our knowledge economy by improving immigration is part of the government's economic plan that is creating jobs for today and tomorrow. The comprehensive plan and its six priorities focus on Ontario's greatest strengths: its people and its strategic partnerships. Yes, our economy is important, but so is the society that we're building here. I believe that our proposed legislation, if passed, would reinforce the cultural and social importance of immigration in our society. We want immigrants to come here and to continue to plant deep roots, build strong communities and become great citizens, because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

Sixteen months ago, we committed to taking immigration into a new direction, and today we're doing just that. I believe that the proposed Ontario Immigration Act is not only a new direction, but it's the right direction for this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

It is now time for responses.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's an honour to stand here today and respond to the minister's statement. For five months now, I've had the honour of serving as the official opposition critic for citizenship and immigration. I take great pride in making sure that I get out to many communities across the province and meet with people. I've had the chance to sit down with literally hundreds of people and hear their stories about why they decided to come to Ontario, why they decided to bring their family to Ontario and why they decided to make Ontario their new home.

We have legions of highly qualified people who came to Ontario from around the world with the goal of making this their home and the home of their children. We entice them to come here. Ontario used to be the number one destination for newcomers to Canada. We tell them that their education experience that they have in their home country can be of invaluable service to our great province here in Ontario. But just a couple of weeks ago, around Christmastime, one doctor in Brampton whom I met with told me that when you land at Pearson International Airport in Toronto or, as Hazel McCallion would tell you, Mississauga, you become a zero. It doesn't matter how many points you have on your scorecard coming into this province. When you land at Pearson, you become a zero. All the education that you have in your home country and the work experience that got you in the door seems to disappear, as far as this government is concerned, once you hit the arrivals concourse at Pearson International Airport. There are so many people who have a skilled trade in their own country, and they come here and they become a zero. They can't practise that trade in Ontario.

We do have economic needs to fill existing jobs in this province. There's no question. It's also worth pointing

out that, as was confirmed today by the EQAO, part of the reason that we have that need is because the current government is failing to ensure proper education, especially in math, for our children.

The problem with the Provincial Nominee Program isn't solely the number of spots that we have. It's that the province is doing a poor job of making sure that those spots are allocated to fit the province's economic need. In other words, we also do a poor job of retaining the PNP applicants after a few years. That's because, as you increase taxes and as you increase the cost of living in Ontario, you really make all of the other provinces in Canada a lot more attractive and appealing for people to move to. So we're not retaining the PNPs that we have. They're coming here, they're staying for a while and then they're leaving because there are better opportunities in other provinces.

Our allocation of the Provincial Nominee Program spaces should absolutely be higher, but the federal government isn't going to give us more until we prove that we can make effective use of the ones that we have. In order for us to prove that, we need to improve the opportunities for newcomers in Ontario.

Really, what we've seen, and it's typical of this government, is that they can't get something done, so what they'll do is blame somebody else. In this case, what they've been doing with the PNP is they've been blaming the feds. The finance minister did it last week when he said that Ontario is entitled to more welfare—equalization payments—from the feds, and we're seeing it again. Really, the only people to blame for the failures of this government are this Premier and this current cabinet.

There are some good things in this bill, and I look forward to reading it in its entirety and seeing if there are things that will make this bill worth supporting. But what we've been waiting for on this side of the House now for months—and you have heard the expression many times, Mr. Speaker, that the official opposition has cleared the decks in order to see a jobs plan from this government. We've yet to see anything that resembles a jobs plan from this current Liberal government. If we had a jobs plan in this province, we would be attracting people to this province—skilled employees who want to work here and who want to raise a family.

But I have to give these newcomers credit, because they are not just saying, "I'm going to move to the GTA." They're doing their homework. They realize that under the state we're in right now in Ontario, the opportunities are better for them in Alberta. The opportunities are better for them in Saskatchewan. The opportunities are better in Manitoba. We're seeing more and more skilled workers moving to those provinces, because there's a better opportunity there for them to raise their families.

1530

The future of this province is going to be dependent on the immigrants that we attract here. We need to ensure that we're creating the brightest future possible here in Ontario, not just for the best and brightest that we bring

here, but also for the place that they want to call home and the place that we call home now.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to preface my remarks by thanking Minister Coteau and the staff for giving me a briefing this afternoon at 2 o'clock. It has been a long time since somebody extended that kind of courtesy to me in order to explain what was happening in an upcoming bill.

Although I'm going to be critical of some parts of this bill, I want to thank the minister and the staff for finally, after 12 years of me standing in this House talking about immigration matters, actually going ahead and doing something so that Ontario is not the last and only place in Canada that is not being part of that great movement of immigration.

Quebec signed the accord to choose its own immigrants in 1973—41 years ago. For 41 years, they have been doing what Ontario is hoping to do today. For 41 years, they have done all of the things that we today somehow think are important.

The British North America Act, section 95, sets out that there is a dual jurisdiction for immigration and for agriculture, the only two shared jurisdictions under the British North America Act, and yet Ontario has been a laggard in accepting its responsibilities for choosing immigrants and settling immigrants. We need to look to other jurisdictions, because not only Quebec, for 41 years, has done a better job than Ontario, but so have British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and even Prince Edward Island.

Finally, Ontario is getting on board. It's a timid getting-on-board, I have to admit. We take about 125,000 immigrants a year, and we are saying that 4% of those are now going to be chosen in part by the province of Ontario; 4% of those who are going to come here will be mandated and chosen by the province of Ontario. Other provinces have a much higher percentage. I am mindful of what the bureaucrats told me this afternoon, and rightly so: We have to start somewhere, and I am thankful that at least we're going to choose 4% for the first time in our history.

Sadly, there are many things here in the act that cause me some grief. Sadly, there's a whole emphasis on compliance and enforcement and those who fraudulently accept immigration to Canada. Having worked in the immigration department myself for more than 20 years, I can assure everybody in this place and everybody in this country that the number of people who fraudulently gain entry is less than half of 1%. So I think that Ontario ought not to be going down this path. Are there people who cheat the system? Undoubtedly. Are the numbers large? No, they're indubitably very, very small, so we ought not to be putting that as part of what we're doing. Are there marriages of convenience, adoptions of convenience, bogus documents? Yes, there are, but they are very small in the overall scheme of things.

Much has been said, highlighting what is happening here. I want to say that we need to do the kind of job that Quebec has done for 41 years. We need to assess the

immigrants while they are still in their home countries. We need to assess them and tell them what kind of opportunities are here, and also what kind of upgrades they are going to need, that they can undertake while they are there, before they come, or what they're going to need when they get here. This is only fair. It is unfair to individuals and to other countries to take their best and brightest doctors, engineers, nurses and everybody upon whom they rely and bring them here to a place where they cannot practise their profession.

I want to conclude with this: I started working in immigration—I did, next week 41 years ago. Forty-one years ago, in 1973, I started working at Pearson International Airport. You know, there was a thing there called Ontario Welcome House. The Ontario government was there, and they helped people with their OHIP applications. They helped them to navigate downtown. They helped them to find a hotel if they didn't have anywhere to stay on the first night. They helped them to find a job. They helped in a hundred ways. This government and preceding governments have stopped doing that. It's important to go back if we're going to do the settlement right.

Last but not least, I think the government needs to say something to the federal government about the federal government's plan to stop citizenship until eight years' residency. Now you can apply at three years, if you've been here three of the last four years. They're going to up it to six out of the last eight. That is unfair to the people who have chosen Ontario and Canada to make their home.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments. It is now time for petitions.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have the member from Timmins—James Bay, who wants to stand on a point of privilege.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll try not to take too much time.

I just want to say at the outset of this particular point of privilege, as House leader for the New Democratic Party, and as New Democrats, that it's not something we normally do. We normally try to work with those here so that we can find collegial ways to be able to move forward with whatever it is that we're doing in this House.

But I find myself in a bit of an odd spot, because what happened here yesterday, I think, is not only wrong in its very nature; I think it affects the ability of members to do their jobs here in Parliament, to a degree.

Yesterday, a member rose in this House. I don't know the riding—Prince Edward—Hastings. The member from Prince Edward—Hastings rose in this House and introduced a very good bill. The bill was an act to proclaim January as Tamil Heritage Month, something that we support as New Democrats and, in fact, something our party president actually worked on for some time, and he is an active member of the Tamil communities.

I had made it clear that we would be supporting this unanimous consent. I know that I talked to my colleague from the Liberal side of the House, the House leader, and I had mentioned it to some of the Conservatives who were sitting in my area.

The member got up and, rightfully so, introduced the bill, did as all members have to do, and then asked for unanimous consent, which is his right. When unanimous consent was asked, we did not say no. We allowed the unanimous consent to go forward. Somebody in this House—in the case, on the government side—said no, for their own reasons, which they can explain.

My point of privilege is not so much what happened as far as the outcome of the unanimous consent, as far as the vote, but it's what happened after. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings falsely reported the vote of the New Democratic caucus on that particular bill. He sent a letter to the Tamil communities, in which he says:

“It was with great regret that I follow up today about my earlier email that I sent regarding the passage of An Act to proclaim January Tamil Heritage Month.

“Today, when I attempted to ask for unanimous consent to have the bill pass all three readings quickly, members of the NDP and Liberals refused to support the motion”—which is not true. We never refused consent on this bill. In fact, we were in favour.

My point of privilege is essentially this: The effect of this type of publication being put in the Tamil community, into people's ridings, is to try to influence them in a certain way that could affect how they're going to vote and react in this House in future deliberation.

We all know that, as members, one of the basic privileges that we have is our ability to come into this Legislature, and come into committee, to give freely what our views are on a particular issue and to freely vote on an issue in the affirmative or the negative.

In this particular case, you have the member from Prince Edward–Hastings who is putting out a falsehood about the representation of the vote of the New Democratic caucus but that has an effect of putting members in a position of “Oh, my God, what happens if this happens again?” and could influence the vote of an individual member of this House and could influence how they're going to deal with a particular debate in this House.

We all know that one of the basic things in this Parliament, and all Parliaments worldwide under the British parliamentary system, is that members have to be free to feel, to speak their minds, to say what they have to say, and to be able to vote. If somebody comes in contradiction to that and tries in some way to bully people into a different position, it is, quite frankly, an undermining of that particular right.

1540

I want to very quickly go through a couple of citations in some of our authorities, both O'Brien and Bosc and Erskine May. The first I want to go through is a ruling that was given by Speaker Milliken back in 2005. The member from Windsor West had been accused by a Conservative MP when a Conservative MP sent a letter

into the member's riding saying that he had voted in a certain way in committee when it came to a particular matter that was being dealt with in that committee. What the Conservative member was doing was falsely reporting how the member did or didn't vote. As it turns out, he wasn't even on the committee; he was being alleged to have voted a certain way on committee when he wasn't even there. The member mischievously sent a letter into the person's constituency in order to put the fire into the riding when it came to this particular issue. It was a divisive issue; it was an issue regarding the gun registry. The Conservative member put a false allegation by way of a letter into the member's constituency in order to try to put pressure on him, should the vote come back into the House, to vote a different way, if he had done so.

Speaker Milliken was pretty clear in his ruling. I just want to read very quickly what he said in his ruling. I believe that we have sent you a copy of this. If not, I'm prepared to give you the copy as well. This is Speaker Milliken in his ruling:

“The fact is that this document distributed in the riding of the honourable member for Windsor West disseminated information about the sitting member's activities and positions which the honourable member for Windsor West disputes. This may well have affected his ability to function as a member and may have had the effect of unjustly damaging his reputation with voters in his riding....

“After due reflection on the facts of this case, I must conclude that the honourable member for Windsor West has presented on its face a convincing argument that his ability to function as a member of the House has been interfered with.”

A prima facie case of contempt was found because you cannot, in this House, try to falsely report in a person's constituency, or out there, what a member has done in this House in a way that tries to influence how they may react to a particular issue in a future deliberation of this House or when it comes to particular votes.

I also want to quote very quickly from page 83 of O'Brien and Bosc. Under the “Privilege Versus Contempt” section, which I'm not going to read because it would take too long—you understand what privilege and contempt is; I don't need to explain it. But it says that an affront of those particular rights is “deliberately publishing a false or misleading report of the proceedings of the House or a committee.”

It then goes on to say within Erskine May that the term “proceedings of Parliament” has received judicial attention, and there's a fairly long section which I'm not going to read, but I'm going to get to the point. If you read page 234 under “Proceedings of Parliament,” and then page 236, it says, “An individual member takes part in a proceeding usually by speech, but also by various recognized forms of formal action, such as voting....” It's clear that the process of voting is actually a proceeding; it's part of a proceeding.

What this member did was to falsely report, first of all, what the vote of the New Democratic caucus was, but

also tried to influence and put pressure by the Tamil community onto us on a particular issue that could affect how this caucus or other members would vote or deal with particular issues.

I just want to say, in summation, that the reason that I raise this—and it's not something I naturally wanted to do, but one of the reasons I wanted to raise it is this: It is clear in this House that if you allow this type of thing to continue, and you allow members to get up and falsely report what has happened in this House as a way of putting political pressure on members or caucuses on particular issues, we are sliding down a very slippery slope. If we don't, as members of this House—and if you don't, as Speaker of this House—find a way to curb that, it encourages this type of practice to happen in the future.

I understand. Along with Mr. Wilson and others, I've been here for 24-plus years. I understand there's a cut and thrust in this place. I understand that at times it's intensely partisan, and I don't have a problem with that. At times, I've been intensely partisan.

But what we cannot do is to do things in a way here in this House that falsely reports what has happened in the House as a way of being able to interfere with a member's ability to do his or her job when it comes to representing their constituency in this Legislature.

I just say again: I think this sends us down a path that we don't want to go. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give this due consideration because I think at one point, we have to say that enough is enough. If we allow this type of practice to continue, it will get worse and worse and I think it will descend into something that we don't want to see in this Legislature. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The government House leader on a point of order. On the same point of order?

Hon. John Milloy: Yes, Mr. Speaker. If I could just make a brief presentation, on behalf of my party, on the presentation that has just been made by the NDP House leader, I want to say that we have some sympathy with the points that he brought forward. What's happening here is we're trying to find a balance here in the Legislature between the right of any member to ask for unanimous consent, in this case, and there have been other cases, to have a private member's bill passed at all three readings—so the balance between that and the fact that the standing orders and the way and traditions and functions of this House do not have a clear path for private members' bills to proceed to third reading and a vote.

The tradition of this House, ever since I've been here, has been for House leaders to sit down and discuss the various private members' bills that have been put forward by members of their caucus, and to engage in discussion and agreement to bring them forward. Usually these discussions are about fairness. There's usually an issue of equity.

I remember when I was first elected here, and we'd all wait for the House leader to come in and say, "Okay, two of our Liberal private members' bills are going forward,

two from the other parties, and two from such and such. We've all sat down and figured out ones that we could agree on." Mr. Speaker, you would know this. Every member knows this.

It's difficult to explain to stakeholders the process by which private members' bills pass. The number who come to see me as House leader—I have constituents who come to see me, and they're constantly raising concerns: "Why is it not going forward?" It is difficult to explain, like so many things around here.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, what happened yesterday is not very helpful, because the honourable member, as is his right, asked for unanimous consent on a bill which I support and which I suspect every member of this Legislature supports. But because he was not following the traditions, because it had not been something that had been discussed amongst House leaders and an agreement reached, I shouted no. Mr. Speaker, I will say that: I was the one who shouted no. At the same time, I stood on a point of order, you may remember, to explain that this was a matter to be dealt with with House leaders, and I sent a follow-up letter to the member—I copied the member—to the Tamil community, explaining the fact that this was a procedural matter. There is a tradition. There is a way for these bills to be dealt with. This was in no way a reflection upon the bill.

What happened, Mr. Speaker—and I'm not putting myself in the same shoes as the New Democrats because, in their case, the House leader indicated he had not given a no when it came forward. We saw a gratuitous letter go out, saying that, all of a sudden, the NDP and the Liberals don't support this bill. It seemed to cast aspersions about how we felt about this issue of having a month for the Tamil community. Just to echo some of what the New Democratic Party House leader said, it was certainly something that could be used against us politically, that somehow we were against this.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, this is a complicated place, and it's complicated to try to explain to people that there are traditions and there are ways of doing things. To come forward with a document like that, which, I believe, Mr. Speaker, did not represent what was going on here—what was going on here was the push and pull over procedural matters. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's helpful, I don't think it's within the spirit of this Legislature, and I would hope—you'll get into what Mr. Bisson said, but I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that you would at least warn members that to try to present something in the way that it was presented is certainly not in the spirit of this. You know, Mr. Speaker—and I don't mean to pick on them, but I can't help but notice all the grins of the Tory staffers down there, who I think are in the midst of preparing their own press release to say, "John Milloy said no to the bill."

This game has got to stop. This is about the way in which we deal with private members' bills, and to somehow come forward—I have said no and I will say no again, because there is a process to go through. You know what, Mr. Speaker? There have been members on

that side of the House and there have been members of the New Democratic Party who have also said no, not because they're against the bill but because of the procedures and the way that it's moved forward.

Mr. Speaker, at the very least, I think you should give very close consideration to what the NDP House leader said. It's an issue that deals specifically with him and representing what he did or did not do. But I would hope at the minimum that you would, in fact, caution members that these types of games are not helpful and not in the spirit of what happens here in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The government House—the opposition House leader.

1550

Mr. Jim Wilson: Not quite the government House leader yet, Mr. Speaker.

Listen, I'm living in la-la land at the moment, I guess, because the government House leader has just given us a semi-lecture on how things are normally done in this House. I don't know; I think I've been House leader a couple of years and I don't recall any of this nonsense that he's talking about. If that was the way this was done, you guys had lots of opportunity—months and months—when this bill was in the same form but under another member's name, Mr. Coteau, who is now the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and you could have passed the bill. I brought it up at House leaders on a few occasions and we couldn't get any agreement. So if we wait for you guys to come up with your fairy tales about how things are supposed to be done in this House, the Tamils would never have January proclaimed as Tamil Heritage Month, and that's what is at issue here.

I think we have a guilty conscience—you got caught. There have been hundreds of bills in my 24 years done three readings in one day. I remember doing one as labour critic, when everybody agreed on presumptive legislation for firefighters and workers' compensation. There was no disagreement that day. I've done up to seven of them myself. This is an issue that was not controversial until you guys got a guilty conscience overnight because you were asleep at the switch.

Now, the next time it comes up—because this is what matters here—if the member for Prince Edward-Hastings asks you again for second and third reading and unanimous consent for that, will you consent to that? That's the right thing to do on behalf of the Tamil community, and that's what we're going to do in this caucus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll defer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. Before I come to you, a member who has not spoken has stood and wants to make a point of order.

The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: It was my honest belief, and it still is my honest belief, that when I asked for unanimous consent for the Tamil heritage bill yesterday, I heard noes from both corners of the House. It was clear that I heard a no from across the aisle and I honestly thought that I heard a no—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, you didn't. You knew exactly what you were doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: Is that right?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 156.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would remind the member that I have to rule on the point of privilege, so you have to hold that. Do you have anything further to say to wrap up?

Mr. Todd Smith: Again, all I can say is that it was my honest belief that I heard noes from both corners of the House. I stand by that and I will stand by that forever.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. To wrap up, the third party House leader.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just very quickly, I want, again for the record, to say that we actually did not oppose unanimous consent yesterday. In fact, we had communicated that we'd be voting in favour, and I think the submission from the Conservative caucus speaks for itself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, let me say very clearly that the point of privilege was submitted appropriately and was dealt with at this time for that reason. I also thank all members for their submissions. I will reserve my ruling on that issue and will return back to the House with my ruling.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I will sign the petition, as I agree with it.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

“Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board;

“Whereas this has created an unfair two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario, where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

“Whereas removing these simple exemption loopholes in the RTA law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.”

I’m pleased to affix my name to this petition and I will give it to Aqil.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me by some concerned families that I personally agree with in the city of Mississauga, asking about the Safer Families Program in Peel region. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children’s Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel community; and

“Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario’s child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

“Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children’s Aid Society and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children’s Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program.”

Speaker, I completely agree with this petition. I’m pleased to affix my signature on it and to send it down with page Anne.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition from the member from Oxford, but it also represents many of the feelings in my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

For “the purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’ RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and” immediately implement a prohibition “of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario” like in my riding in Durham on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to Jaclyn, one of the new pages here.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition from my constituents addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and....

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method....

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm proud to sign this on behalf of my constituents.

1600

SHALE BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation closed public access to Shale Beach off Highway 26 in the town of Blue Mountains suddenly and with no consultation; and

"Whereas the closure will impact fishermen, swimmers and visitors who have been frequenting the beach for generations with no problem; and

"Whereas the closure will remove one of the only wheelchair-accessible fishing locations in the area; and

"Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government won't let Ontarians enjoy anything for free anymore without implementing a new tax or a new fee;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Transportation immediately restore access to Shale Beach so that residents can continue to enjoy the beach and all that it has to offer for generations to come."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign it, and I want to thank Mr. Barry Cripps of Collingwood for sending it to me.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition that represents the views of my riding of Durham, but this one is from the Lambton-Kent-Middlesex area and reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error"—it's on-board diagnostics; "and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails', which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress"—\$450 to get a provisional test;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program" completely.

I sign this on behalf of my constituents and present it to Emon, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER WORKPLACES FOR A STRONGER ECONOMY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU LIEU DE TRAVAIL AU SERVICE D'UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 146, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et la main-d'œuvre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Naqvi.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important bill, Bill 146. At the outset, I'd like to say that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West, as well.

Speaker, our government is committed to standing up for Ontario's workers, and that means strengthening workplace protections for workers and increasing fairness for businesses that play by the rules. This is truly a priority for us and, therefore, I'm happy to rise for the second reading of Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would strengthen workplace protections and increase fairness for employees and businesses to build stronger workplaces, a stronger economy and a stronger Ontario. The Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act has truly been a team effort—the result of open dialogue, thoughtful engagement and conversations with people across Ontario.

I was honoured to have both the United Way and the Law Commission of Ontario join me last December as I announced this proposed legislation. I want to thank them for leading the discussion around these important issues and for putting forward many thoughtful solutions that are reflected in this bill. This process shows that out of

positive conversations and constructive recommendations comes real and meaningful action to protect Ontarians.

This proposed bill is both the right thing to do and an essential part of ensuring that we help grow our province in the right direction. It is part of our government's plan to invest in our people by strengthening workplace protections and to support a dynamic business environment that increases fairness for companies. It is that dual commitment which saw us increase the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, the highest in Canada, on June 1, giving many Ontarians a raise and linking future increases to the cost of living, helping our businesses thrive and succeed. Like minimum wage, now is the time to stand up for Ontarian workers with this important bill.

Our government recognizes that the nature of work is changing. As we continue to create jobs and recover from the Great Recession, our rules have to keep up as well. This proposed legislation covers a lot of ground. At its heart, it's about two things: (1) making sure Ontario workers are treated fairly and paid for the work they do; and (2) taking action to protect vulnerable workers and levelling the playing field for employers who play by the rules.

We know that the world of work is changing and that the job market is now global. Almost 30,000 more temporary foreign workers are now working in Ontario compared to just five years ago. No one should ever have to surrender their passport, or be promised a job that doesn't exist, or be charged for inappropriate recruitment fees. The proposed bill would help fix that by amending the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, which our government passed in 2009, to apply to all temporary foreign workers in Ontario here through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. This would give temporary foreign workers protection against being charged recruitment fees and having personal documents such as passports withheld by employers.

It would also extend anti-reprisal laws to any worker inquiring about or exercising their rights under the act. And among other things, it would give temporary foreign workers up to 42 months to file claims and make sure their rights are protected and enforced.

It will also require employers to give information to employees about their rights. These changes will ensure that all workers working in Ontario, no matter where they are from or where they live, are treated fairly.

Ontarians work hard, and at the end of their shift, at the end of their route or at the end of their rounds, they deserve to be paid for that work. If they are operating a business, they deserve to know that their competitor is not undercutting them by not paying their employees. When workers are not paid, they often come to the Ministry of Labour for help. Currently, however, they can only recover up to \$10,000 in unpaid wages through a Ministry of Labour order. This means that right now, both time and monetary limits on claiming unpaid wages make it harder for workers to get all that they are owed. For anything over \$10,000, they currently will have to resort to the courts, which we know could be costly and

of course takes a longer period of time, not to mention that it's a fairly litigious process. The current system makes it easier for offending businesses to take advantage of them as well.

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That is why we are making it easier for workers to get the money owed to them by proposing to remove the \$10,000 cap under the Employment Standards Act on the recovery of unpaid wages through a Ministry of Labour order to pay. Workers would no longer be forced to pursue large claims through the courts, saving both workers and businesses time and money.

If passed, Ontario would also increase the time limit for the recovery of wages under the Employment Standards Act to two years across the board so that older claims are dealt with fairly, and workers get the money that they are owed.

These new protections, if passed, will also better protect workers recruited through temporary help agencies by establishing joint and several liability between agencies and their clients for failure to pay wages. This will help level the playing field for good employers. Clients of agencies would be liable for regular wages and overtime pay if the agencies don't pay up, encouraging those companies to use agencies that treat employees fairly.

I know that the member from Brampton West, who is also my parliamentary assistant, will further expand on our government's efforts to protect these workers. It's important that he speak to this issue because he has been a strong champion for better protections for people who work through temp help agencies, in fact, bringing forward a private member's bill back in 2006. A lot of work went into that private member's bill that resulted in the government adopting it in 2009 and bringing protections. Now we're making the second round of changes to strengthen protections for employees who work through temp help agencies and also ensure fairness for them. I want to thank the member from Brampton West for his leadership and for his hard work and diligence on this very important matter, making sure that his constituents, or our community members from all our ridings who may work through temporary help agencies, have better protections and do get paid for the work they do. So thank you to the member from Brampton West.

Speaker, folks in this House know that safe workplaces come down to people looking after one another. The Ministry of Labour has been undergoing its largest transformation in the last 30 years, creating a culture that puts health and safety at the centre of every workplace. We recently introduced basic health and safety training for all businesses in Ontario, which comes into effect on July 1, and a working-at-heights training standard for the construction sector, where falls are a leading cause of injuries, because our job is to make sure that workers go home to their families at the end of theirs. That is what Ontarians expect when they go to work or their co-op placement, and that is what they deserve.

Ontario has very clear rules, and if you're performing work for someone, you are entitled to rights and

protections under both the Employment Standards Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These acts ensure that you are paid at least minimum wage no matter what your job title is or what you agreed to when you started working there. The only exceptions are people who are self-employed, trainees, co-op students and other unpaid learners performing work in exchange for course credit as part of an accredited high school, university or college program. Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act already makes sure that co-op students have a safe workplace, and the Ministry of Labour has strong rules in place to make sure that that is the case for all co-op work placements. But they do not have individual protections, and that is not right. That is why we want to change that.

This bill, if passed, would extend the coverage of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to co-op students, trainees and other unpaid learners, ensuring that they have the same individual rights and protections as other workers. This absolutely makes sense and is the right thing to do.

The Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act builds on our continued action to protect more workers in more workplaces. This bill would also give the Ministry of Labour the authority to require self-audits of safety standards to extend our protections to more workplaces. Apart from this legislation, we put an additional \$3 million into proactive enforcement in the last budget, bringing our annual total up to \$7.5 million per year. This allowed our government to hire more officers and almost double the number of inspections, and we are committed to reaching the \$10-million commitment per year laid out in our poverty reduction strategy.

It would require employers to provide free handouts explaining the rights under the Employment Standards Act—in their language, if available—from the Ministry of Labour, because an empowered worker is a safe and productive worker and because employers are more likely to comply with our rules if their employees are aware of their rights and protections.

Finally, we know that construction is a key driver of Ontario's economy. Our government recognizes this, and as a result, we are investing \$35 billion in infrastructure projects over the next three years to create and support 100,000 jobs each year, growing our economy and building strong communities. That's on top of about \$100 billion that we have spent since 2004, since we came into government, building schools, hospitals, public transit, highways, roads and bridges all across Ontario.

That's why we are strengthening the Labour Relations Act, the cornerstone of our fair and balanced labour relations system, by proposing to reduce the open period in the construction industry from three months to two. This will allow our skilled workers to spend more time building roads, bridges, schools and hospitals to grow our economy and ensure a prosperous Ontario for generations to come.

In closing, the proposed Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act is about taking action to protect

workers, especially the most vulnerable, and levelling the playing field for businesses that play by the rules. We want to ensure that employees are paid for the work that they do, and that temporary-help-agency employees are provided the fairness that they deserve. We want to ensure that temporary foreign workers have the protections they need and deserve.

This proposed bill is part of our government's economic plan to create jobs for today and tomorrow. We are investing in infrastructure and in a dynamic business environment. We are building our knowledge economy, and we are supporting our small businesses, but most importantly, we are investing in our people, the people of this great province.

We can and will build our economy and, at the same time, work together to protect the most vulnerable for a stronger Ontario. I really hope that all parties in this Legislature will support this important bill, as we are one Ontario.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll ask the member from Brampton West to proceed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very happy to rise today for the second reading of the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act. At the heart of this bill, it's about standing up for workers, making sure that they are treated fairly and letting businesses that play by the rules know that our government has got their back.

Our bill, if passed, would take important steps to ensure that every Ontarian gets the paycheck they have earned at the end of the day. This bill would better protect vulnerable workers from dangerous work situations and, more importantly, would increase competitiveness for businesses who obey our laws and play by the rules.

This is what workers and their families in Brampton West and all across Ontario deserve, and something I have fought for since coming to Queen's Park, so it gives me great pleasure to rise and speak on this bill. As the minister has indicated and shown in his remarks, this bill covers a lot of ground, but I want to focus on a couple of specific issues.

The first is around strengthening protections for employees working through temporary help agencies. This is an issue that I have heard about in my community, and I introduced a private member's bill in 2006.

I was pleased when the government built on this and introduced the first legislation of its kind in Canada specifically targeting temporary help agencies in 2009. It said that employees had a fair shot at getting hired directly by employers, that they were not being charged for things like resumé-writing and interview preparation and that they were aware of their rights under the Employment Standards Act.

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This bill, if passed, would build on this legislation and take the next step to increase protections for these workers, because workers deserve to be paid for the work they do. It makes no difference where you work or who

you work for. That is why we're proposing to amend the Employment Standards Act to make temporary help agencies and the companies that use them jointly liable for unpaid wages or overtime pay owed to workers. This means that workers in Brampton West and all across Ontario will get paid, either from the temporary help agency or the company. This not only protects the workers but also creates a competitive advantage for businesses that play by the rules and treat their employees fairly.

In addition, no worker should ever be assigned to the most dangerous job simply because they're recruited through a temporary help agency.

WSIB experience rating programs are meant to encourage employers to reduce injuries and encourage workers to return to work. WSIB premium-based penalties, or rebates, are based on an employer's injury and accident cost record. However, in the temporary help agency sector, experience rating costs are applied to the agency supplying and paying the worker, not to the client employer for whom the worker is supplied. This currently happens even though injuries occur at the client's workplace. The proposed legislation, if passed, would extend this joint liability to workplace injuries through the WSIB so that every business will make sure their workplaces are safe for all workers and that they are properly trained for the job they are assigned to.

If passed, this bill would better protect temporary workers, ensure that temporary help agencies who operate above board can compete, and encourage employers to work with reputable agencies.

We have strong rules in place to make sure workers in Ontario are protected and treated fairly. We have worked hard to make sure workers are aware of those rights and protections by requiring all workplaces in Ontario covered by the Employment Standards Act to post the Ministry of Labour poster on Employment Standards Act, 2000, rights and responsibilities. However, vulnerable workers, including young workers and new Canadians, may be reluctant to read a copy of this information from the poster in the workplace. Therefore, our bill would require that employers provide individual employees with a copy of this information in their language from the ministry. This will significantly increase the likelihood that vulnerable employees will learn about the strong employment standards rights and protections we have in place to keep them safe.

Extending these protections is part of our government's plan to invest in people and keep them safe, because that is the building block of a stronger Ontario. That is why the Ministry of Labour has developed an enhanced education and outreach strategy to help ensure compliance and to raise awareness by placing education materials in locations and on websites. Workers can now access fact sheets on our website, or they can call our employment standards information centre toll-free at 1-800-531-5551 to get information in 23 different languages about their rights and how to file a claim.

Our government is also taking steps to fulfil its commitment to protect vulnerable workers by enhancing

proactive enforcement of the Employment Standards Act, 2000. As part of the 2013 budget, the government has invested ongoing funding of \$3 million for additional employment standards officers and staff. This funding is being used to hire and train new members of a dedicated enforcement team to conduct even more proactive inspections.

The Ministry of Labour is also planning to develop and share with key stakeholders an operation policy regarding enhanced use of the Employment Standards Act, 2000, enforcement tools, particularly with regard to repeat offenders.

Importantly, the Ministry of Labour will also ask for input from a ministry forum of employees, employers and academic organizations to address complex and challenging issues that affect vulnerable workers.

Mr. Speaker, in Bill 146, our government has introduced additional protections for vulnerable workers that will also strengthen Ontario workplaces. If passed, this bill would help our workers, help our economy and help our families. I hope that all parties will support this very important legislation. A stronger economy for all in our province and protection for the most vulnerable workers, which they need and deserve, is what we're working towards.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I appreciate being able to follow my colleague from Brampton West and the Minister of Labour. As you know, they've itemized a number of initiatives to strengthen safety in the workplace, which I think is the duty and obligation and responsibility of all members of this House. As part of that, we've introduced the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, and there are a number of regulations that I could itemize in detail for you. At heart, it's about alerting or re-alerting members of the public, but also going after vulnerable young folks who may be thinking of taking up the habit of smoking over time, because, of course, folks who try it in their youth will grow up to become adult smokers. That's why we're talking about menu labelling. We're talking about more advanced warnings, more intense fines; for example, for retailers who may sell cigarettes to underage clients. That goes on as part of the government's general thrust, not only with the safety-of-workplace initiatives, but also bodily safety, or maintaining health and a sound mind in a sound body.

I'll give you an example, Speaker, of some of the initiatives that are coming through in this legislation that has been supported by a number of external stakeholders. I'm pleased to quote, for example, Dr. Scott Wooder, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, to which I also belong: "Ontario's doctors wholeheartedly support the government's plan to introduce menu labelling in large chain restaurants, and also believe in the need for restrictions on the marketing of unhealthy food to kids. Obesity is strongly associated with an increase in chronic disease—and over half of all adults and one third of children are overweight or obese."

This, along with a number of other initiatives, is part of the government's overall thrust.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Since you're finished, that's good, but I would suggest you stick to the bill. That was a good plug for smoking, but—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Anti-smoking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Anti-smoking. It didn't relate to what we were talking about, so I'd appreciate it if you'd stick to the agenda. Thank you.

Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's really important that we take this opportunity to comment on this particular bill because when I think of my critic responsibilities—the Green Energy Act as well as small business red tape—there's so much more that we can be doing to foster a stronger workplace in Ontario. It doesn't matter whether we're talking to union leadership, small business and everyone else in between; the number one issue for all sectors of our economy right now and our Ontario workplace is the cost of energy. If this government doesn't get their act together and face the facts, stand up to the mess that they've made and start making corrective steps, we don't have to worry about stronger workplaces for a stronger economy. The reality is that if we want a stronger economy, we need to start focusing in on the headline, if you will, of our economy, which is our small business.

I don't know whether it was mentioned or not, but the Canadian Federation of Independent Business actually awarded this Liberal government honourable mention, in terms of a Paperweight Award, for all the red tape and the burden specifically associated with WSIB.

In terms of stronger workplaces and a stronger economy, they are placing fees upon taxes in the workplace that are giving business owners no choice but to consider closing down or sending all their margin, by the way of tax, to the Ontario Liberal government. It is absolutely shameful.

Again, I repeat: This Liberal government was awarded the Paperweight Award, honourable mention, for the mess that they've created in additional workplace tax through WSIB. It is absolute nonsense. This Liberal government seems to be thinking they—they're masters of titles of their bills. They say one thing on the one hand, and they do the absolute opposite.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm just going to address some of the comments as they relate to the bill, Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act. When we see these pieces of legislation come from the government side of the House, we always look at the policy effectiveness. There are some minor relatively positive steps that this piece of legislation looks to address. It does look to close some loopholes in Ontario's labour statutes—in particular, the changes around the definition of "worker" in the Occupational Health and Safety Act to

include people who are performing work for no pay, such as unpaid trainees, commonly called unpaid interns.

All of us in this House know that this is an ongoing issue across the province. This piece of legislation will close the loophole under the Occupational Health and Safety Act that protected only workers who were paid. This change is an obvious one to make since there's no reason why an unpaid worker should not be covered by the same standards. But it won't spark any great revolution in the treatment of unpaid workers, so this is one of the highlighted issues that we have with the legislation as it stands right now.

One of the other ones is the new information disclosure requirements and self-audits that this piece of legislation asks for. It requires distribution of the ESA poster to every employee and adds another tool, the employer self-audit. In some of the conversations I've had, this is a mandatory—a voluntary sort of audit which really has no teeth and likely will not address any of the ongoing and systemic safety issues that we've seen in the province of Ontario.

That said, we look forward to the debate. We always come to the table trying to make pieces of legislation such as this stronger. We won't shift course on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2013.

I'd like to suggest that my esteemed colleague from Huron-Bruce provides some very valid points. One of the biggest things that I'm hearing every day in my constituency is the cost of energy and people being put out of business because of that cost of energy, and the continued escalating costs that we're going to continue to receive, not only from a business perspective but a home perspective. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're hearing it in yours as well. We need to ensure that we are looking at those things.

She's been across the province doing round tables on red tape. It's one of the big things, again, that I hear in my riding. The Liberal government of today continues to ratchet up the need for more paper, more reports, more things that are taking people away from the front line, the ability to actually work with the consumer and bring them into their storefront to produce revenues to keep them in business.

At the end of the day, if they want to talk about stronger workplaces, they need to look in their own backyard at their abysmal track record over the last 10 years on the policies and procedures they've put in place to actually run people out of Ontario. Businesses are leaving at breakneck speed. It's just sad.

It's sad for those young people who we've just invited here today. The pages who we welcomed to this great chamber today: What are they looking forward to in the future? We see nothing from that side of the House changing any of their approaches currently—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would hope that the member would stick to the agenda. He's

floating too much. We're talking about the WSIB; we're not talking about other things.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I'm just trying to ensure that I have context for where I'm coming to.

The WSIB is one of those things I continually hear abysmal stories about. I just had a contractor call me the other night, in fact, not specific to this, exactly, but it is WSIB-related, where they're forcing them to take coverage that does not even cover them properly like their private insurance.

WSIB, red tape and the soaring cost of energy need to be fixed. If we can do that, there will be stronger workplaces.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The parliamentary assistant has two minutes.

Mr. Vic Dhilon: This issue, I would say, is probably one of the most important issues that affects my constituents in Brampton West. Having heard the opposition, they don't even want to talk about it. They've clearly shown that they want to dodge the issue, but this issue is very, very important.

One of the problems is that a lot of people who are abused in these temp agencies don't know the rules, don't know the law. One of the ways we're changing that or helping that situation is by ensuring that they know the Employment Standards Act. A lot of it involves new immigrants. So we're ensuring that they get the information that they need to protect themselves in their language. Some 23 different languages are what we have already prepared with respect to the explanations of the Employment Standards Act. As well, we are devoting \$3 million to hiring labour inspectors so they can go into these workplaces and ensure that all the rules are being followed.

In terms of recouping the money that's not being paid to these temporary workers, we're making it easier for them to go after their employer. Again, a lot of these people are new immigrants. Through a ministry order, if we find that people have not been paid, they will be forced to pay, and they will avoid the lengthy and costly process of going through Small Claims Court. This is a big step in terms of helping people who are abused by these unscrupulous employers.

I look forward to the debate, and I hope we can get all-party support for this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to have been asked to speak to this bill this afternoon. Bill 146, which is entitled the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2014, was introduced by the Minister of Labour back in early December of last year, I believe. It amends five statutes relating to employment and labour relations.

This is a very significant bill. While the public policy objectives are understandable, there are many concerns that have not yet been addressed. I'm going to spend some time this afternoon just raising some of the

concerns that we have had, or that I've heard, so far since the bill has been introduced.

The WSIB implications found in this bill are profound and may be problematic. It is likely not well thought through. With a bill of this size, these impacts can be far-reaching.

The first of the amendments affects the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act (Live-in Caregivers and Others), 2009. The act is amended to expand its application from foreign nationals employed in Ontario as live-in caregivers to foreign nationals employed in Ontario or attempting to find employment in Ontario.

These changes provide for the preparation and publication by the director of employment standards of different categories of documents for different categories of foreign nationals and their employers. Additionally, it allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations providing that an employer may recover certain prescribed costs and requiring that an employer of a foreign national give notice at the beginning and end of the foreign national's employment.

The second act amended is the Employment Standards Act, 2000. The act is amended by adding a requirement that an employer provide each of his or her employees with a copy of the most recent informational poster published by the minister under the section and requires an employer to provide available translations of the poster if they are requested.

With a new section added, an employment standards officer may, by giving written notice, require an employer to conduct an examination of the employer's records, practices or both to determine whether the employer is in compliance with one or more provisions of the act or the regulations. It is this section that sets out new rules that govern how an employer self-audits. Additional amendments remove the \$10,000 maximum cap on orders, and changes are being made to time limits on recovery of wages to two years.

The third act amended in this legislation is the Labour Relations Act. These changes apply specifically to the construction industry and establish two-month open periods during which a trade union may apply to the board for certification as bargaining agents of any employees in a bargaining unit. Additionally, this change also affects the time period in which employees may apply to the board for a declaration that a trade union no longer represents the employees in a bargaining unit.

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The fourth act amended is the Occupational Health and Safety Act, specifically in its definition of "worker."

The fifth act amended is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. These amendments add a definition of "temporary help agency" and changes provided in certain circumstances where these agencies are to lend or hire out the services of a worker to another employer and the worker sustains an injury while performing work for another employer; the other employer is responsible for that injury.

I have spoken to many stakeholders, and within the industry, some of these things that are in this bill have

come as a surprise. They have all told me that they were given little advance warning about this bill and weren't consulted at all. This, I would argue, is something that we see regularly from this government: They bring pieces of legislation forward or they make decisions without properly consulting with the groups and the individuals who are affected by their legislation.

Specifically—and I'll go into more detail about this a little later—it is important to note that the WSIB was not consulted prior to the announcement of this bill.

Speaker, some of the comments about Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act—I'm going to read some of those comments regarding this legislation.

“(1) Joint and several liability for unpaid wages”—some are concerned with subsection 74.18. “With the adoption of Bill 139 in 2009, the Ontario government became the first province to codify employer status for staffing firms.” This group's members are “proud of their status as employer of record for the purposes of the application of all employment standards, workers' compensation, taxation, human rights and other legislation and regulations. Temporary employees are employed by the staffing firm and not the client. The staffing firm employer and employee agree to the terms and conditions of employment including training and compensation. Bill 146 proposes to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000”—which I sort of highlighted in my opening remarks—“to introduce joint and several liability between temporary help agencies and their clients for unpaid regular wages and overtime pay. The minister has not been able to justify this proposed amendment and ministry staff recognize, following an ESA compliance blitz, that claims for unpaid wages are within the provincial employer average in the province and therefore there is no elevated risk for employees” in this sector.

Of course, I'm rising in the House today to bring feedback about Bill 146 from individuals and stakeholders across the province who quite frankly feel that they were left out of the consultation process.

This stakeholder in particular has “always been of the position that it is of utmost importance for the ministry to increase the number of inspectors and improve enforcement mechanisms under all acts to ensure that the unethical players”—which, I've heard from a number of people, are a small minority—“are held accountable.” While these stakeholders strongly believe that wages are a fundamental entitlement for all employees, this group is opposed to this amendment for several reasons.

“Take the example of a small company who has a business that needs to hire temporary workers to accommodate a seasonal increase in customer demand. The small employer hires a group of temporary workers from a well-established staffing firm with which it has dealt for years and pays the staffing firm for the workers' services. The temporary agency unfortunately falls victim to an unrelated fraud and so it does not pay the workers. Under Bill 146,” this current proposed legislation that we'll be debating over the next number of weeks, “the

small employer would have to pay a second time for the services of the workers. Such a payment could be crippling” for any small business. Moreover, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada to propose joint and several liability in the area of employment standards.

As I said, this act, of course, amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, WSIA. Other stakeholders are concerned with the proposed amendment to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act: “This amendment would enable the WSIB, under its experience rating programs, to ascribe injuries and accident costs to the staffing firm's client. Historically, and in every other jurisdiction in Canada, temporary agencies incur the WSIB premium and accident costs for employees that they hire. Bill 146 proposes that the premium and accident costs of injuries to temporary workers would be automatically transferred to the employer that retained the workers from the agency.”

Several stakeholders are opposed to the WSIA amendment contained in Bill 146 for several reasons. Bill 146 “proposes to remove the impact of the costs associated with a temporary worker's injury from the staffing firm's experience rating and place it with the client or ‘other employer.’ As a result, in the event of an injury, the client will be faced with a surcharge or a lower rebate at the end of the year. Historically (and currently in all provinces without exception)” in the country, “the staffing firm is recognized as the employer of record for purposes of WSIB/WCB/CSST. It is clearly the staffing firms' responsibility and legal obligation to provide general orientation and training for employees and inspect the workplace prior to supplying labour. Our members”—this note goes on to say—“are very diligent in ensuring that this is respected. It is the industry norm that a facility tour be conducted prior to supplying labour and ensure a very clear understanding with respect to who will be responsible for site-specific training, to ensure competent persons and that the client has a health and safety program in place.”

This group “has always been of the position that it is of the utmost importance for the ministry to increase the number of inspectors and improve enforcement mechanisms under all acts to ensure that the unethical players (a small minority who may conduct business with clients looking to ‘contract out’ unsafe work) are held accountable. The solution is not to penalize all staffing firms by imposing a legislative amendment of this nature—a legislative amendment which would ‘undo’ years of education and improved health and safety practices.”

The WSIB as well is, of course, impacted here: “The WSIB is a mandatory employer-funded ‘no-fault’ insurance scheme. A worker is entitled to benefits when he or she suffers an accident in and of the course of employment. In most cases, an employer is required to bear the WSIB costs of the injury regardless of whether it was at fault for the accident. The ‘no-fault’ principle has been a cornerstone of the workers' compensation system since its inception.

“The issue of whether an employer is ‘at fault’ and should be punished for a workplace accident is adjudica-

ted under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The Occupational Health and Safety Act imposes joint and several liability on temporary agencies and client employers for workplace safety violations. This means that the ministry can charge both the agency and the client employer if a workplace accident or safety violation occurs. There have been many cases where client employers have been charged for accidents suffered by temporary workers.

“One exception to this principle from the schedule 1 employer perspective relates to situations where the negligence of another schedule 1 employer contributed to the accident. In such circumstances, the employer can apply to the WSIB to transfer some or all of the accident cost to the employer who caused the accident (the worker’s benefits are not impacted by cost transfer decisions).

“Simply stated, the government is proposing to reverse the current situation and make the employer who retained the workers from the staffing firm responsible for the accident. Presumably, the employer could apply for a transfer of costs to the staffing firm in appropriate cases.” This person says that they appreciate that there are certain merits to the approach proposed by the government.

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“It seems likely the employer who controls the work-site is more likely to be ‘responsible’ for the worker’s accident and thus some would say it should bear the cost consequences. However, this ignores the reality that entitlement to WSIB benefits is not based on ‘fault.’

“For example, consider the example of a worker who has been working at a number of different employers through an agency and suffers a gradual onset injury to his or her back at a particular employer. Under the Bill 146 reforms, the employer who retained that particular employee from the agency on that given day is responsible for the accident costs. There is virtually no chance that the employer could seek a cost transfer and SIEF cost relief (based on a pre-existing condition) has become increasingly difficult to obtain. There is no good reason that the true employer of the worker”—the staffing firm—“should not bear the costs of the claim.

“The reality that many claims are not the ‘fault’ of any particular employer is the inherent problem with the approach being taken by the government.” It’s their view that staffing firms “should continue to be treated like everyone else in in the system and incur the cost of the claim unless it can be shown that the claim was caused by another employer. It is our view that the current cost transfer provisions provide an adequate remedy for temporary agencies when the accident is truly a situation involving the negligence of a client employer. The proposed amendments distort the historical cornerstone principle of the workers’ compensation system in Ontario and at the end of the day will have no impact on actual compensation to workers.”

Again, I think the trend that we are seeing with Bill 146 is really the lack of consultation, and I would urge the minister, over the next time period, to really sit down with the folks who are concerned with Bill 146.

To continue, Bill 146 proposes to introduce joint and several liabilities between temporary help agencies—I was just through this with the comments I read—and their clients for unpaid regular wages and overtime pay. While it’s important for the ministry to inspect and improve enforcement mechanisms in all current legislation to ensure that any unethical players are held accountable, this bill fails to make those changes.

An example of this is when a small business hires a group of temporary workers from a well-established staffing firm. In the event that this temporary agency is subjected to an unexpected incident of fraud and therefore does not pay its workers, as I said before, under this bill, the small business would be required to pay a second time for this group of workers’ service. These types of large payments could potentially cripple a small business. Of course, I don’t need to remind anyone in the House that we have a lot of people unemployed in the province. We lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs over the last 10 years, so we don’t want to put any more burdens on employers and job creators in the province.

These types of large payments, as I said, could potentially cripple a small business in any of our ridings in this province. Ontario is the only province in which their jurisdiction proposes joint and several liabilities in its employment standards, and I have said that a number of times.

The solution to eliminate clients looking to contract out work that is deemed unsafe is not by penalizing all staffing firms by imposing this legislation, Bill 146. The Occupational Health and Safety Act already allows for transferring of costs to the client if an employer is responsible for a worker’s injury.

Additionally, Bill 146 brings up many concerns relating to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, and I’m going to spend some time of the time I have left here to talk about the WSIB as it pertains to Bill 146. These amendments would allow the WSIB to ascribe any injuries and/or accidents as well as any related costs to the staffing firm’s client. Historically, it has been temporary agencies that incur the WSIB premiums and accident costs for any employees they hire. Bill 146 proposes that the premium and accidental costs would be automatically transferred to the employer that retained the workers from a temporary agency. As a result, the client will be faced with a surcharge or lower rebate at the end of that particular year. Historically, it has clearly been the staffing firm’s responsibility and legal obligation to provide—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: —general training and orientation for employees, and complete inspection of workplaces prior to supplying—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You beg to differ? That’s not your decision to make. You will keep it

down, and if you want to discuss anything, you might want to go out in the hallway. Final warning.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll continue, Speaker. Just to back up a bit, historically it has clearly been the staffing firm's responsibility and legal obligation to provide general training and orientation for employees, and complete inspection of workplaces prior to supplying the workers. This is done to ensure competent workers, and that their clients have a health and safety program in place.

With WSIB being a mandatory, employer-funded, no-fault insurance program, a worker is entitled to benefits when he or she suffers from a workplace accident. In the majority of cases, the employer is required to bear some of these injury costs regardless of whether they were at fault.

On that, I want to talk about, of course, Bill 146 and schedule 5 in particular, and what I think the government intends to achieve, and then what I think it actually will achieve.

Schedule 5 of Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2013, clearly finds its genesis in the December 12, 2012, final report of the Law Commission of Ontario entitled *Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work*. I'll just refer to it as the LCO report going forward. Specifically, in recommendation 37—in the LCO report, it's page 108—it reads as follows: "The Law Commission of Ontario recommends that:

"37. The Ontario government and the WSIB review the impacts of WSIB policies and practices:

"(a) to determine the effects of the experience rating program and other policies on vulnerable workers, most particularly temporary foreign workers and temporary agency workers; and

"(b) consideration be given to attributing health and safety incidents to the client work site."

Number two, while the LCO report recommended that the Ontario government and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, WSIB, "review the impacts of WSIB policies and practices," I think it's fair to say that I would question if there is a review that was actually facilitated. I would bring that to the attention of the minister as well.

Point three, when it comes to schedule 5: The recently released report from WSIB special adviser Douglas Stanley, *Pricing Fairness: A Deliverable Framework for Fairly Allocating WSIB Insurance Costs*, February 2014, commented on the LCO report—*Pricing Fairness*, pages 20 and 21. However, *Pricing Fairness* did not analyze or study these comments, simply suggesting—and I'll read from that document—that "the WSIB needs to examine the responsibilities of temporary employment agencies and client employers with respect to employer classification and experience rating, and consider amendments to the current policies and practices to ensure that appropriate premiums are assessed and that costs are attributed to the appropriate employer."

Point number four, as related to schedule 5: This suggestion, with respect, is nothing more and nothing less than a parroting of the LCO report recommendation 37.

The needed analysis suggested by the LCO report and affirmed by *Pricing Fairness* has not been conducted. I respectfully submit that this lack of needed study represents a fatal flaw in the development of schedule 5 in Bill 146.

As I stated before, I just highlighted I guess what I think schedule 5 in Bill 146 was intended to achieve. I want to go on now to talk about what I think it actually will achieve.

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As we know, Bill 146 is a large omnibus bill. In my opening, I talked about the different acts that are going to be altered because of this bill. Certain elements tend to get lost in the broader reform context. I respectfully, again, submit that this has happened in Bill 146.

We are reminded of the comments of an opposition member and former leader in this Legislature a number of years ago in response to a government omnibus bill. I'm going to quote this former political leader:

"I have a real problem with omnibus bills. I'm not going to be able to deal with my problems in the last two and a half minutes I have. There is just so much in this bill. It should not be presented as one, large omnibus bill. I'm beginning to think this government only knows about omnibus bills. It's not just that we can't deal with everything in the course of the debate of the evening, of the day. It's because the omnibus bills—the parts we miss, the parts we couldn't debate, the parts that the public wasn't aware of—come back to haunt us."

That's from Hansard, on November 19, 2002. That was the member, back then, for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, the former leader of the Liberals, Lyn McLeod.

Speaker, going back to Bill 146, to schedule 5, and what this bill will actually achieve: I would say, agreeing with former Liberal leader Lyn McLeod, that this bill could come back to haunt us, will come back to haunt the government of Ontario, the WSIB and, ultimately, the taxpayers and the people of Ontario.

This is what the bill does, as pertaining to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act of 1997—I just want to read a section of that act:

"Subsection 2(1) of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 is amended by adding the following definition:

"'temporary help agency' means an employer referred to in section 72 who primarily engages in the business of lending or hiring out the services of its workers to other employers on a temporary basis for a fee; ...

"2. Section 83 of the act is amended by adding the following subsections:

"Temporary help agency worker

"(4) For the purposes of this section and despite section 72, if a temporary help agency lends or hires out the services of a worker to another employer who participates in a program established under subsection (1), and the worker sustains an injury while performing work for the other employer, the board shall,

"(a) deem the total wages that are paid in the current year to the worker by the temporary help agency for

work performed for the other employer to be paid by the other employer;

“(b) attribute the injury and the accident costs arising from the injury to the other employer; and

“(c) increase or decrease the amount of the other employer’s premiums based upon the frequency of work....”

In effect, Speaker, schedule 5 of Bill 146 that we’re debating here today transfers the financial cost of claims from the experience rating record of the actual employer, the temporary-help agency, to the client employer. There will be a transfer of financial accountability. At present, if a worker employed by a temporary-help agency is injured, the ER record of the temporary-help agency only is impacted.

The only reason for schedule 5 seems to be this: By some undisclosed analysis or judicial-notice-type conclusion, the government is of the view that somehow employers responsible for injuries are being left off the hook and schedule 5 corrects this.

I would submit, Speaker, that even if this premise is true—a premise I reject quite strongly until shown true by objective evidence and analysis—schedule 5 thwarts its own goals.

Actual examples of the flaws of schedule 5 have been introduced to the minister and explored in other forums, so I would encourage the Minister of Labour to again reach out to stakeholders who are affected and job creators in the province who are affected by this legislation.

Since I have a bit of time left, moving on to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, because, again, this is impacted by Bill 146: The Occupational Health and Safety Act already holds a contracting employer to account—so of course the Occupational Health and Safety Act already holds the contracting employer to account, pretty much as if it were the actual employer. The definition of “employer” under the Occupational Health and Safety Act is quite clear: “‘Employer’ means a person who employs one or more workers or contracts for the services of one or more workers and includes a contractor or subcontractor who performs work or supplies services and a contractor or subcontractor who undertakes with an owner, constructor, contractor or subcontractor to perform work or supply services.”

The Ministry of Labour, on its website, describes the relationships and responsibilities in this fashion; “Who has employer duties under the OHSA for temporary help workers? Where a worker is employed by a temporary help agency to perform temporary work assignments for agency clients (i.e., the client employer) in the client’s workplace, the agency employer and the client employer are jointly responsible (as employers) for taking every precaution reasonable in ... the day-to-day control over the work and working conditions of the workplace to which the workers are assigned. However, an agency employer is not relieved of its legal duties under the OHSA for the worker’s health and safety during an assignment. Employer duties in the OHSA apply to both

the client employer and the temporary agency employer.” The occupational health and safety branch already has adequate legal and administrative resources. Some of the solution may be a simple matter of channelling those resources.

Moving along now to Ontario’s integrated health and safety strategy, an important element of the recently developed integrated health and safety strategy is the focus on occupational health and safety for vulnerable workers, including the creation of task groups for vulnerable workers. That was put out in a bulletin on December 16, 2013, by the Ministry of Labour.

Chapter 7.1 of the strategy calls for targeting “enforcement ... of vulnerable workers,” including temporary agencies. I think a lot of the stakeholders who I’ve talked to support these initiatives. I think the target enforcement is probably the most effective way of clamping down on the agencies who aren’t abiding by the rule of the law and treating workers as they should be treated here in the province of Ontario.

I’ll come back to that shortly, but one thing—since we’re talking about the WSIB, I’d like to just touch on a bit about the unfunded liability of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Of course, as I said in my opening, the Minister of Labour and the ministry, as I understand it, didn’t reach out to the WSIB regarding Bill 146. I think that, with an unfunded liability to the tune of about \$13 billion—I think that’s somewhere around the deficit that the Premier is running now for the whole province of Ontario—if you’re good managers, you would reach out to the WSIB. Clearly, that wasn’t the approach that this minister and the Premier have taken. I don’t think they understand the seriousness of having an unfunded liability at the WSIB of about \$13 billion.

I just want to read a bit from a report. I believe this was from the Auditor General. We got together with the auditor, a number of us—I forget which committee it was—to hear her report prior to the Christmas season.

Just a bit of background: “The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is a statutory corporation created by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, which Bill 146 impacts. Its primary purposes are to provide income support and fund medical assistance to workers injured on the job.

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“The WSIB also funds programs to help prevent workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities. The WSIB endeavours to apply an integrated approach to workplace health and safety that promotes co-operation and collaboration among its stakeholders, including the government.

“The workplace safety and insurance system is financed through premiums charged on the insurance payrolls of employers”—just to deviate, I would like to remind the government that Ontario employers today are paying the highest WSIB premiums in the country. You talk about a burden—and I’m not going to deviate from Bill 146 because I understand the rules of the Legislature, and the Speaker would bring me back in line, but I will

say that it's a perfect opportunity to raise concerns regarding a prior Ministry of Labour bill, and that was Bill 119. We've all heard from our independent operators, small contractors who are forced to buy a government-run insurance program that is clearly flawed. I actually wrote a letter to the minister prior to Christmas, demanding that he look into the effects of Bill 119 and how many jobs have been lost. As well, the government is far short of their goals that they set out in Bill 119. I can tell you, it's adding additional cost; as I understand, up to \$10,000 per small business. If you're in the home-renovating business, you're hit extremely hard. The Liberal government is no friend of small independent operators here in the province.

But, as I said, "the workplace safety and insurance system is financed through premiums charged on the insurable payrolls of employers; the WSIB receives no funding from the government. Under the act, the government has the sole responsibility for setting benefits and coverage through legislation, while the WSIB has direct responsibility for setting premium rates, within the following guideline:

"The board has a duty to maintain the insurance fund so as not to burden unduly or unfairly any class of schedule 1 employers (generally all private sector employers) in future years with payments under the insurance plan in respect of accidents in previous years.

"Notwithstanding this legislative guideline, the assets in the WSIB insurance fund are substantially less than what is needed to satisfy the estimated lifetime costs of all claims currently in the system—thus producing what is known as an 'unfunded liability.'"

In the auditor's 2005 annual report, they noted "that the WSIB's unfunded liability had reached \$6.4 billion at that time...." Of course, I stated it's around \$13 billion today, I believe. So, in 2005, \$6.4 billion—it's doubled, essentially, in that time frame. So in the 2005 report, unfunded liability reached \$6.4 billion, and the auditor "commented on the importance of the WSIB having a credible plan to reduce it." The auditor "noted that failure to effectively control and eliminate the unfunded liability could result in the WSIB being unable to meet its existing and future financial commitments to provide worker benefits."

They decided to revisit their previous comments "on the unfunded liability with a view to providing a more detailed commentary on the issue given the recent turmoil in the global financial markets and the impact this has had on the viability of pension plans and other worker benefit plans, such as workers' compensation insurance."

I believe that this report was done around 2009 and 2010, so it was just after the financial crash.

"Workplace safety and insurance systems operate in a complex business environment because they serve a number of stakeholders with competing interests and views pertaining to the key areas of insurance benefits, coverage, and premium rates. For instance, employers want low premium levels while workers want high

benefit-payment levels. These competing interests influence benefits, coverage, and premium rates, which can have a negative impact on the size and growth of the unfunded liability. It is incumbent on the WSIB and the government to try to balance such views against the need to maintain financial stability."

I read the background of this report just to remind the Minister of Labour and the government that it's not in the best interests of the people of Ontario to go ahead and make legislation without consulting a key stakeholder, that is, the WSIB, especially when the unfunded liability goes from \$6.4 billion in 2005 up to \$13 billion.

I would give credit to the management team at the WSIB right now. I know that since Elizabeth Witmer has become the chair, the unfunded liability has improved, and that's good news for the people of Ontario.

Just the summary: "The WSIB's funding ratio represents the percentage of assets it has available to meet its financial obligations. As of December 31, 2008, its funding ratio was 53.5%—significantly lower than any of the four large provincial boards with which"—the auditor—"compared Ontario (British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec) which average 102%. In each of these four provinces, legislative and policy differences are key factors that contribute to their higher funding ratios. A board's funding ratio is largely determined by the size of its unfunded liability, which is the amount by which the board's financial obligations exceeded its assets"—as I said, \$6.4 billion in 2005. "As of December 31, 2008, the unfunded liability was \$11.5 billion," so it was quite an increase in just that short period of time.

The main observations arising from this prior Auditor General's report are as follows.

"Eliminating or reducing the unfunded liability requires the interaction of four key levers—legislated benefits, coverage, premium rates, and investments—to work effectively in tandem. The inability to eliminate the WSIB's unfunded liability over the last two decades has been owing in part to the desire to satisfy all the stakeholders. Both the WSIB and the government may have to commit to a different strategy with respect to the setting of premium rates and benefits if the WSIB is to be able to eliminate the unfunded liability within a reasonable period."

Again, a new management team was brought in since this report was written, and kudos to them for the job that they appear to have done on the WSIB when it comes to the unfunded liability itself.

The WSIB advised the auditor that "its 2008-12 strategic plan, the Road to Zero, contains a number of initiatives that target and support the financial sustainability of the system. Key initiatives include the prevention strategy, which provides for a collaborative prevention partnership model; social marketing, which supports the organization's prevention mandate; development of a new case-management approach to service delivery; and other initiatives in the areas of return-to-work programs, health care solutions, and occupational disease services. However, despite these initiatives, the WSIB advised"

the auditor “that, because of the significant financial losses resulting from the global financial market downturn, its target of full funding by 2014, which was originally established back in 1984”—to no one’s surprise, they said that that would not be achieved. The WSIB, at this point, hasn’t set—they didn’t set a new target, but I believe now there is a target to have the unfunded liability down to zero.

Again, the fact of the matter is that the government can’t be introducing legislation, at least of this magnitude—a bill this size—without reaching out to key stakeholders like the WSIB. If you are managing a budget, as the Premier is and her cabinet and caucus colleagues are, of over \$130 billion, I think it’s quite worrisome they are introducing a bill that is going to put more hardship on the WSIB.

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Looking back to another section of the bill, the solution to eliminate clients looking to contract out work that is deemed unsafe is not by penalizing all staffing firms, which I’ve said, by imposing Bill 146. The Occupational Health and Safety Act already allows for the transferring of costs to the client in the event if an employer is responsible for a worker’s injuries.

Of course, I mentioned the concerns, Speaker. This bill brings up many concerns relating to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. These amendments would allow the WSIB to ascribe any injuries and/or accidents, as well as any related costs, to the staffing firm’s client. Historically, as I said, it has been temporary agencies that incur the WSIB premiums and accident costs for any employees they hire.

Just to reiterate again, Speaker, as I’m winding down here, Bill 146 proposes that the premium and accident costs would be automatically transferred to the employer who retained the workers from a temporary agency. As a result, the client will be faced with a surcharge or a lower rebate at the end of the year.

Historically, it has clearly been the staffing firm’s responsibility and legal obligation to provide general training and orientation for employees and complete inspection of workplaces prior to supplying the workers. This is done to ensure that competent workers and their clients have a health and safety program in place. With WSIB being a mandatory, employer-funded, no-fault insurance program, a worker is entitled to benefits when he or she suffers from an injury.

So, as you can tell, it’s actually a pretty complex bill, one that I believe—the government said it a number of times today—the government just hasn’t reached out enough to stakeholders. Of course, coming from a small business background myself, the health, safety and protection of workers have to always be a top priority. There’s nothing more important than the safety of Ontario’s workers. Regardless of the party that you represent or the riding that you represent, we all know that that issue is paramount in this province.

However, Speaker, this bill doesn’t do anything when it comes to doing the things we need to do to create jobs.

We’re going to find that there are going to be negative effects placed on job creators in this province.

It doesn’t make any of the much-needed changes to our province’s labour laws. I said this when we were talking about first reading, but it doesn’t bring the needed changes to our province’s labour laws that would create the reform needed to ensure that employers repatriate back to Ontario and that existing companies grow here in the province.

For the past year, we have only continued to see more manufacturing companies relocate from Ontario. I can think of the last two weeks alone in southwestern Ontario close to my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: We lost a bed manufacturer. They made beds for long-term-care facilities. Of course, they’re relocating back to the US.

It’s just that every couple of days there seems to be another manufacturer in southwestern Ontario closing. In Sarnia it was Imperial Oil’s lubricants. We all know about Kellogg’s and Heinz now, and Worthington Cylinders in Tilbury. There have been a number of plant closures, and we’re well aware of that. But I would have hoped that the government would bring forward bills that would actually send a message that Ontario is open for business again and we’re ready to create jobs again in the province. But, Speaker, when we see the loss of over 300,000 manufacturing jobs but at the same time see more than 300,000 new people working for the government, it’s completely unsustainable. I would hope that every member in this House would understand the severity of that situation. I’ve said this a number of times, but I truly believe that the race to the bottom is happening as we speak.

Ask the people at Heinz and Kellogg’s how they’re enjoying, or are going to be enjoying, making zero dollars per year. I think that’s the severity of this crisis. These were well-paying jobs that are leaving Ontario.

Bill 146 is not bringing these companies back to Ontario or putting that open-for-business sign on the province. It’s clearly evident that there is just not enough decisive action and strong leadership being taken to tackle this problem. On this side of the House, in our caucus our leader, Tim Hudak, has clearly stated that manufacturing is the backbone of a strong economy and the foundation of the middle class in Ontario. It’s time that we put Ontario back on the path, back to recovering jobs that have been lost.

Ontario has the ideas, the workers and the resources to succeed. Our plan will create the kind of environment where businesses will be able to ensure ongoing economic competitiveness and one where businesses can work in an environment created for economic growth, not one in which additional legislation is being added—and I will say, additional legislation that’s just not going to create jobs. I think we’re the only ones that truly are committed to supporting our province’s job creators. Quite frankly, this bill, Bill 146, directly affects employers in the province.

Government policies need to encourage growth, not create additional barriers. It must get back to its proper,

limited role—that is referring to government. Government must get back to its proper, limited role to provide strong, independent and smart regulation, conduct long-term planning and give businesses and job creators the tools they need so they want to stay in Ontario to do business.

Our plan will get our economy growing and help create jobs. It's changes like these that the people in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and, I can say with confidence, the people across southwestern Ontario and, I think, all across Ontario have told us that they want to see implemented.

The current path is failing the people of this province. It's failing job creators, and clearly, it isn't working. I'm sure the Premier, the Minister of Labour and the cabinet have to be looking at that themselves, when they open up a newspaper and see that another Heinz or another Kellogg's has left Ontario—that clearly, after 10 or 11 years in power, their decisions have clearly affected where these companies are going.

It has been a pleasure to speak for almost an hour to Bill 146. I know it has been a rousing debate and very interesting for all the members in this House. We won't be supporting this bill, but I think we've offered some good suggestions on how the minister and his assistant can reach out to stakeholders and improve the bill if they're going forward. I just would urge the minister to do this.

With this House back in session, I look forward to putting more ideas, with my colleagues, on the table to create jobs. Unfortunately, this Bill 146 won't be doing it. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to just tell you how really honoured I am, of course, to return to the Legislature after our winter recess. It's good to see everybody in good health and good spirits. I'm pleased to jump right into the debate on a piece of legislation that I think makes some modest improvements for the working conditions of people and particularly some vulnerable segments of our workforce—some small steps.

I look forward to using the remainder of the time, up until when you see fit at 6 o'clock, to present our party's position. I listened intently of course to my colleague the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, he and I know that we come from, I would say, diametrically opposed positions on labour reform—

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Pretty much, I would say. I don't think we would argue about that. But his speech was well researched and well nuanced, and I think he clearly articulated his position on a couple of issues. It didn't address the full scope of the bill. He focused on the impact solely on the business side and not really the impact from the workers' side and their position when it

comes to working in vulnerable labour markets and how they see their pathway to gainful employment or security in their workplaces, the various aspects that I think are built into this bill. Again, it'll be my pleasure to speak on behalf of that.

1730

There are some really important first steps that I'm pleased to see the government take initiative on, particularly for the young workers that were in the House just moments ago. Unfortunately, they've left this debate. But we do have an issue in this province where we're actually allowing young people to undervalue themselves. We're not telling them that their education, their energy and their efforts, right from the get-go, in their job history is valued. Hopefully, this bill takes some steps to remedy that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, his comments on Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2014. The Minister of Labour and his parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West, have explained the needs of this proposed legislation. We've heard from the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex that, generally in favour, there are some real difficulties with the legislation protecting workers.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Mr. Phil McNeely: We certainly have to say that the cap on the recovery of wages seems so ridiculous to have. Of course, if you go over that cap, then you're into the courts. We know that to recover \$10,000 in the courts, you'd have to probably spend \$20,000, so the courts aren't effective in this type of thing. It's great that that cap is being raised. That's what we need. This is good.

Because many vulnerable workers are afraid to make a claim before they leave a job because of the possibility of employer reprisal, the longer time period is going to be helpful in recovering those wages as well.

I didn't realize that we had so many foreign workers here. I suppose it depends on the type of employer. Most of our employers are honourable and are responsible. But I would think that many of them are brought in because they can be mistreated in the workplace—just the necessity of providing them with rights in 23 languages, in their own language, what they can expect from their employers.

The dual responsibility for wages is great as well—that the agency can't blame the employer, etc.

So I think a lot of things in the bill are great. I thank the member for being positive about this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I would say this: The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex has done an exemplary job of dissecting, or at least analyzing, what he called an

omnibus bill. I really have three points. It is a bill that should be broken into its relevant parts.

The section that deals with the transfer of the experience rating system is quite troubling. If members know about this—this determines the tax on payroll that the WSIB premium is; it means that some members that may not get that need to pay attention to the transferring arbitrarily of the experience rating system. It's very troubling that that rate could double.

Actually, WSIB premiums are the third point I make. WSIB premiums are really a tax on payroll, but what it does for the employer is it protects them from liability. The employee who is injured, who falls off a ladder, is not eligible to sue the employer. The employer gets lumped into roofers or pipe fitters or whatever the rate classification is, and the experience within that sector determines the tax on the payroll. The government itself has so mismanaged this—it needs to be brought to attention.

Let's deal with the way it's working today. We have the highest premiums in Ontario—that's a tax on payroll—and we have the highest deficit. The unfunded liability: The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I believe, said that over their term it has grown from about \$4 billion—the listeners at home should be aware of this—to \$13 billion. It's disgusting, quite frankly. It's shameful that this government can stand for protecting employees, because most of them, the employees—the most troubling part of this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: —is the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, for the third time.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to touch on the safety issue with regard to Bill 146. This piece of legislation does actually amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act “to clarify responsibilities for workers who are injured during a job placement arranged by a temp agency, by attributing the cost to the employer where the injury occurs and assessing wages by reference to income earned from the agency.” So it's clear as mud. There you go. That said, it is important to address the safety issue of workers who are placed out in the field by temp agencies.

The other issue on this is the placement and the protection of foreign nationals and migrant workers, as well. This is a very big issue in this province, especially in some of our rural areas, where you do have workers who do not know their rights, who are placed at risk in the field—sometimes literally in a field. To extend the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act to all migrant workers would provide some protection, but its effectiveness would be limited, because it relies—and this is the key piece—on employee complaints, rather than on proactive enforcement.

This is actually a disturbing trend that we are seeing in the government of the day: that you are basically saying to employees, “You do have some rights. There's a poster over there: ‘Know your rights.’” But then the avenues that those employees can take to actually put those rights into action are not clear at all.

This act could have included a comprehensive public registry and licensing system of all employers and recruiters, similar to what they're doing in Manitoba. The government of the day decided not to do that. It is a missed opportunity, very similar to the lost opportunity of the Dean report and not bringing fall prevention standards into place in the province of Ontario. It seems to me that worker rights and safety rights of workers are actually a secondary thought as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has two minutes.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the members from Essex, Ottawa–Orléans, my esteemed colleague from Durham, and the member from just down the 401 from my riding in Kitchener–Waterloo.

It was great to participate in the debate over Bill 146, which was introduced by the Minister of Labour, as I said, back in December of last year. It is a big bill, and I would again caution the minister—I can't stress it enough—to reach out. This amends five statutes relating to employment and labour relations, and again, I just think that the implications could be devastating for people in Ontario, particularly in the WSIB context of this.

It's a very significant bill, and while the public policy objectives in some parts of the bill are understandable, there are many concerns that have not yet been addressed. I tried to hit on a number of those during my opening remarks here today.

The WSIB implications found in this bill may be problematic. I think they're profound. It is likely not well thought through, and with a bill of this size, these impacts can be far-reaching—and unintended, in some cases.

It's an omnibus bill, quite frankly. Lots of different acts are going to be affected by this. I just would urge the Minister of Labour—who, I have to admit, has been quite good to work with. Like the member from Essex said, the three labour critics probably come from different sides or views of things, but the minister has been good to reach out, so I hope he takes my remarks into consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As I stated in my earlier two-minute hit, it's a pleasure to be here, to be back in the House after our winter recess. It is of course always an honour to stand in this place on behalf of the residents who sent me here, my community of Essex, and to stand as the labour critic for the Ontario New Democratic Party.

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I'm pleased to have a discussion in my first opportunity to speak this week on Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2013. It has

seven provisions within it that amend various statutes. I want to start, at least chronologically on my sheet here, on the fifth, which I believe was the impetus to the bill. It is the changes to the definition of “worker” in the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include people who are performing work for no pay, such as unpaid trainees, commonly called unpaid interns. It was an issue that the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex raised that came out of the Law Commission of Ontario report on unpaid interns.

I want to give a shout-out to those in our various communities and in the province who have really made this an important issue for the politicians in this country to consider at various levels, whether federal or right here in the Ontario Legislature. They are those who run our various workers’ action centres and those who represent migrant workers in the province. Two of them are certainly Deena Ladd, who I’m sure many of you know from the Toronto Workers’ Action Centre; and Chris Ramsaroop, who is an advocate for migrant workers through the Justice for Migrant Workers group, as well as some folks who have done some quite elaborate studies on the issue: Andrew Langille, who is a labour lawyer here in Toronto, and Josh Mandryk, who is a JD candidate at the University of Toronto, who co-authored an article that was printed in the Toronto Star dating back to—I’ll reference it later. They’ve done some wonderful work. I want to give a shout-out to them, as they’ve certainly brought this issue to prominence.

Back to that issue, in this province we have an influx of unpaid workers. Imagine that: We have folks in this province who are asked to provide their labour and to fulfill a job or task without the benefit of compensation, without the benefit of remuneration, without the benefit of coverage and protection under at least the health and safety act and the various other benefits that workers have in this province. So there was a glaring gap in the legislation that needed to be addressed, and I want to commend the Minister of Labour for actually taking the initiative to do that. We’ve spoken about the issue. We spoke to it prior to the end of the last session, and he told me that it was a priority of his to address the issue. I certainly welcomed that as a priority, although in reading the nuances of the bill, we as New Democrats think he could have gone farther. We think this government could always go farther in terms of fully addressing some of the employment standards issues and labour law issues that we have in the province.

One is simply the fact that the changes under the Occupational Health and Safety Act as it relates to unpaid interns will not reduce the usage of unpaid interns as a labour market segment. I have yet to hear the minister acknowledge that we have an issue here when it comes to employers now fully utilizing this grey area to fulfill some of the segments of their labour needs.

Now, I’m certain that he would acknowledge that this is illegal as a prescription under labour law, but it still happens, and I don’t see the changes that are made under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to be addressing

that. What New Democrats would certainly propose is enhanced enforcement and inspection and education, of course, of the fact that we certainly shouldn’t be using unpaid interns for normal working conditions.

Similarly, the influx of temporary jobs: We see that in our communities they have sprung up and are now considered the point of contact if you want to get a job, whereas years ago, you didn’t see these temporary job agencies. You could apply on your own merits. Labour demand was quite large, and it was almost as though everyone could get a job. Certainly I know that in Windsor and Essex county, folks my age were lucky enough to have gotten good-quality jobs in unionized plants in and around Essex county. That no longer is the case in Ontario, where we have a prevalence of unpaid interns, and it includes demographics that are even more vulnerable: immigrant workers and foreign workers and women—particularly young women—who are asked to perform, again, duties that we would consider as being normal or routine in any workplace, but having to fulfill the internship program before they are even given the ability to apply for the job.

I have heard cases of folks who have done one-year internships and then had to apply for the job, where others were doing longer internship periods and were beat out, so now there’s a competition on who can be the best intern. Speaker, it is certainly a race to the bottom when our businesses start to really rely on this area in our society that doesn’t value work, that ultimately says, “As a young worker, you have the privilege of working for us, and we would like to do the least amount possible that we can to gain that work from you.”

So that’s one issue that I think is important to address in a really comprehensive way, that this bill misses the mark on. It’s one issue that potentially, through the deliberations at committee, we could address, and I’m hopeful that those I have referenced, who have done such good work on this issue, will be presenting at committee, should the bill pass towards third reading.

It was mentioned that the bill is an omnibus-type bill, meaning that it does bring in a whole host of different aspects that make statutory changes and affect various different acts. I think the first one, the extended damages provision: The bill replaces the current six-month gap in section 111 on the back wages with a two-year limit, while also removing the \$10,000 cap on damages for unpaid wages. The changes will allow workers to recover a greater proportion of their actual lost wages when employers have violated the Employment Standards Act over an extended period of time. That is a welcome change. There’s no question that should an employer not be able to recover unpaid wages, they should have an extended period of time, and to cap the amount—I mean, if someone is owed \$20,000 in unpaid wages and we’re saying in the province of Ontario that you can only try to recover \$10,000, well, that’s nonsensical. So I welcome that change in the legislation. I think it’s one that makes sense. It puts the money that is owed into the worker’s pocket. It makes a lot of sense to me, and it’s certainly

one that I support. I couldn't imagine anyone in this House not supporting that change.

Number 2, the new temp agency record-keeping and joint and several liability for temp agency workers: I'm certainly going to need some clarification on it, but on the surface, it seems that this could be a welcome change. I know that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the PC labour critic, had some reservations about its implications under liability under WSIB and the WSIA, but as we see it, the bill simply, I guess, forces the two entities, whether it be the company or the temp agency, to come to a decision, to a conclusion as to who is liable in that sense, because ultimately the bill, if it is to be effective, should address the needs of the worker. That's what we're attempting to do, and if that is the thrust of the bill, then I certainly support endeavouring to make it better, because those workers really don't care, at the end of the day, who pays the tab, who supports them post-injury; they just want to know that someone is, and as it currently stands, there is some grey area, and there have been cases where no one wants to take the liability because it hasn't been formalized in the process.

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I think that's a welcome addition to those who have sought employment through temp agencies. It's bad enough, that situation—having to go through a temp agency to seek employment. As I stated, it was not like that in years gone by. It was not like that within my generation—and I'm 36 years old—but now we see a prominence of these things. You have to—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, Speaker, I'm only 36 years old. That does shock you. I look a lot older than that. I feel a lot older than that.

But we have employers that have stopped actually seeking out the best candidate for employment and have simply gone to who can be provided quick, fast, get them in within an 89-day period and then get them out so that they're not liable for any benefits. This is a common occurrence, at least within my region. I don't know if members are seeing it within their own regions. But the prominence of temporary agencies really I don't think is doing us much favour in general in terms of stabilizing our economy and addressing the need for secure, good-paying jobs that afford benefits and support communities.

If we're going to rely on temp agencies, foreign temporary workers, part-time workers and unpaid interns for our labour market, then we are in dire straits, because you will no longer see a stable middle class, as we are witnessing right now. There is an income inequality gap that has been built, and I think it's as a direct result of corporate reliance on temporary workers. This bill does not address those issues.

It doesn't address the wages of those workers who are working side by side someone who is hired off the street or through a job advertisement. Those wages are so desperate. There's a gap there that goes to the temp agency for simply filling that position. That doesn't seem fair. Again, we would love to see that addressed.

I know my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, Cheri DiNovo, has made repeated attempts to address the issues of the gaps within the temp agencies, but to no avail. The government of the day, being the Liberal majority government, did not see fit to actually address those gaps.

There are new provisions for information disclosure requirements, being a poster to be distributed to inform temp workers of their employment standards rights. That is to be given to every employee. Also available in multiple languages—I think that's a good step. But then added on to that is the prescription for temp agencies, I believe, to perform self-audits. The principle of self-audits has some—I would think I would be a little bit reluctant to see—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, what could go wrong? I'd be reluctant to see the effectiveness of the self-audit. I don't know anyone who performs a self-audit who doesn't give themselves a little bit of leeway. I would say that if we are to do that as a province, if we need to know the numbers within temp agencies and those who are recruiting foreign temporary workers, we should do it on our own and it should be our responsibility, because I think that data is important to know as we address our labour market gaps. So the self-audit of the various entities is yet to be seen. I would like to see how that will be discussed at committee and its actual impact and effectiveness. Regardless, it is built into this bill.

There's a fourth provision in the introduction of new protection for foreign nationals working in Ontario. That is, of course, welcome, but it is a small step again in the sense that specifically it extends the protections for live-in caregivers in the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act to other foreign nationals working or looking for work in Ontario, such as temporary foreign workers. It informs them of their employment standards rights in the province. But ultimately it requires those temporary foreign workers and foreign nationals to lodge their own self-directed complaint. If you've ever spoken to anyone who's in a vulnerable work position, anyone who fears the repercussion of raising any concerns within their workplace, you'll know that this is a glaring gap in enforcing the Employment Standards Act. We need to really actively inform people that they have support, and someone will be there to be able to identify those issues within their employment status without actually having them have to do it.

We're a modern country here, Mr. Speaker. We can see workplaces that meet our standard here. We know those who are following the rules and those who aren't. It should be the responsibility of the province and the Ministry of Labour to step up that enforcement to make sure that workers aren't concerned or scared to raise their concerns and to protect themselves, and that we as a province understand that it is our responsibility.

Speaker, there are two more provisions that I haven't spoken about. I'm wondering how much more time I have here.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay, thank you, Speaker. You're awesome. You are one of the best Speakers I think I've ever seen this afternoon since I've been here.

Number six: It reduces the open period for decertification and union rates. My colleague, again, from the PC Party, didn't talk about that whatsoever. I'll be pleased to talk about it. It's interesting that that found its way into this bill, because, again, the bill is Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, addressing issues that are gaps for vulnerable workers, but this one really has nothing to do with vulnerable workers. As I see it, it has everything to do with the open period, the raiding period, that's built into the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

I welcome the change, of course, being a trade unionist and someone who has worked in the trades. I know that the three-month window for the raiding period tends to consume trade unions, and it also consumes those corporations, those companies, that are organized. So it does cause some disruption when you have a three-month period.

It's unfortunate that in this province we see fellow trade unionists raiding each other's units, or bargaining units, but it is something that has always happened. Hopefully this makes it not so appealing to launch an enormous raid campaign against another union. I think it is actually a welcome change on the company's side as well. They would welcome that there would be some stability built into their workplaces, that their workers could concentrate on the work at hand, the task at hand, rather than whether they should join another union and decertify. I think it's a welcomed change, and it's certainly one that I support.

There's one more provision, and that amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to clarify the responsibilities for workers who are injured during job

placements arranged by temporary help agencies by attributing the costs to the employer where the injury occurs and assessing wages by reference to income earned from the agency. I think that will need further discussion and a little closer look in terms of its impact, who ultimately is responsible and how that will impact some of those employers that certainly don't ever intend to keep anybody long term, although that would be a welcome change as well.

Generally, we are supportive of these modest measures that we've seen put forward. We would certainly have liked to see different changes under the Ontario Labour Relations Act as a measure to protect vulnerable workers, ones that I actually included in my first private member's bill, Bill 77, that would enhance the ability for workers to be represented, whether in the service sector or otherwise.

But nevertheless, we look forward to talking about the bill, continuing to discuss and debate its merits, and ultimately to working through the process of committee to take in the various recommendations and input from stakeholders. That is vital, really, to building a better piece of legislation. It's what New Democrats are committed to doing. It's what we've always done, and it's what we will continue to do.

Speaker, I appreciate your indulgence—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The speaker will continue on the next round, starting with you—your time, obviously, if you have a lot of time left.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Vacant	Niagara Falls	
Vacant	Thornhill	

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 20 February 2014

Jeudi 20 février 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 February 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Mrs. Sandals moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Education Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 143, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi sur l'éducation et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Sandals.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I stand in the House today to speak in support of the Child Care Modernization Act. I rise in support of Bill 143, which, if passed, will modernize our child care and early years system and replace the outdated legislation that currently governs child care in this province. If passed, this legislation will make our system more responsive to parents' and children's needs, and better reflect the realities of our modern world. It will also ensure Ontario's families have better access to safe and high-quality care that gives children the best possible start in life, and it will also strengthen oversight in the child care sector.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is transformative—by changing child care and early years programs and services in this province—for the better. It will build on the improvements we have made by positioning Ontario as a leader in child care and early years programs and services. Our ultimate goal is to build a child care and early years system that is high-quality, seamless and meets the needs of parents and children.

Our government has already taken a number of steps in this area. Most notably, we are implementing full-day kindergarten, which will serve approximately 265,000 children annually as of fall 2014. In addition, we have a

new child care funding formula in place that is based on current demographic and population trends. We also have an Ontario Early Years Policy Framework. This framework sets out a vision and direction for early years programs and services for children up to six years of age.

Despite these improvements to the child care and early years system, these services are currently governed by a patchwork of rules and regulations, which can create confusion for families. These rules and regulations are outdated and need to meet the needs of children and families in our modern world.

In last year's speech from the throne, our government reaffirmed our commitment to a strong child care and early years system. We pledged to create a comprehensive early learning and child care system, including the successful extension of full-day kindergarten and child care. Speaker, this proposed bill shows our government is making good on that promise. That is why I'm pleased to be in the House today to speak to my fellow members about the Child Care Modernization Act, which I introduced in December of last year. This bill, if passed, will repeal and replace the Day Nurseries Act, the legislation that currently governs child care in Ontario, which was first enacted in 1946 and has not fundamentally changed since 1983. But our world has changed considerably over the last 30 years, and the DNA, or Day Nurseries Act, no longer reflects today's realities and our deepening understanding of the research on early human development.

The DNA would be replaced with the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, a new legislative framework that would govern child care and early years programming services. If passed, the Child Care Modernization Act would support the government in working with partners to establish a system of integrated, responsive, high-quality and accessible child care and early years programs that support parents and families. It would improve safety and foster learning, development, health and well-being of children, and provide a framework for the regulation of the provision of child care and operation of child care and early years services. It would establish a licensing and compliance framework for child care and set out funding requirements for child care and early years programs and services. It would facilitate and support local planning and implementation of child care and early years services and provide access to information to support parents in making informed decisions about child care options, and improve our ability to evaluate the effectiveness of child care and early years programs.

In addition, Speaker, a key objective of Bill 143 is to improve oversight in the child care sector. This is

because the safety of our children is of paramount importance. To strengthen oversight, our government would have a range of new enforcement tools to protect the province's children and safeguard their well-being, because currently our only option is to take serious issues of non-compliance to court, and that is something that we can no longer wait for. We need more direct ways of enforcing, so our new proposed enforcement tools would apply to both licensed and unlicensed providers and include: the authority to issue administrative penalties, which could be up to \$100,000 per infraction; the authority to immediately stop a child care provider from operating in circumstances where a child's safety is at risk; the ability to issue compliance orders and enforce rules in the unlicensed sector; and the increase of maximum penalties for successful prosecution of offences in the court system from the current \$2,000 up to a maximum of \$250,000.

Additional measures to support the safety of children include, firstly, the prevention of individuals from providing child care when convicted of certain crimes. This also applies to individuals who have been convicted of certain offences under this proposed act and individuals whose membership has been revoked from a regulatory body, such as the College of Early Childhood Educators, over professional misconduct. And it would require certain people who, in the course of their employment, have reasonable grounds to suspect an imminent threat to a child's health or safety when in care to report this to the Ministry of Education.

Child care plays a role for Ontario's families, communities and the health of our economy. This proposed legislation shows that our government is committed to building on our success and safeguarding the well-being of our province's children.

0910

Bill 143 includes measures to help parents make informed decisions about child care options by ensuring parents understand whether a provider is licensed or unlicensed, and providing parents with information about whether a provider has contravened the act previously. While we are currently providing information voluntarily, we want to see this put into law and no longer remain a voluntary measure on the part of the government.

These measures would include:

- prohibiting unlicensed providers from using such terms as “child care centre,” “licensed child care” and “licensed daycare”—they are not;

- prohibiting unlicensed providers from claiming to be licensed explicitly or by implication;

- requiring unlicensed providers to disclose their unlicensed status to parents and retain proof of such disclosures;

- requiring licensed providers post a licence or any other required information or signage in a visible location, and prohibiting copies from being made unless required by law;

- requiring people who are paid for child care services to provide a receipt for payment, if requested by parents;

- requiring providers to publicly disclose any contraventions of the act, or its regulations, including compliance orders, protection orders, administrative penalties and convictions; and

- requiring the Ministry of Education to publish information about contraventions of the proposed act or its regulations.

It would also prevent any child care provider from stopping a parent from accessing their child, or the child care premises, unless the provider believes the parent has no right to access, or may be dangerous or disruptive. We have seen cases where, in fact, parents have been prohibited from visiting their children during the day. That would no longer be legal.

Once again, our government's top priority is the safety and well-being of Ontario's children. If passed, Bill 143 will help strengthen oversight in child care settings and allow the government to respond promptly to non-compliant child care providers, whether licensed or unlicensed.

In addition to expanding the government's powers of oversight, Bill 143 would also increase access to licensed home-based care. This would translate to additional child care spaces in licensed home-based settings. Under the proposed act, the number of children that licensed home-based providers could care for would go up. This number would increase from five to six. This means that if all current licensed home child care providers took on one additional space, they would create approximately 6,000 new child care spaces.

We recognize the role that unlicensed child care providers play in offering child care options for families. In the case of unlicensed providers, they would still be allowed to care for a maximum of five children, which is currently the law. However, unlicensed providers would now have to follow the same rules as licensed providers for relevant age groupings and count their own children under the age of six towards the maximum number of children permitted to be in care. This means that unlicensed providers can only care for two children under the age of two. This restriction is consistent with research on brain development and safety provisions needed to protect very young children.

The proposed legislation also prohibits a person from providing unlicensed child care at more than one location without a licence. That is, it must truly be home child care. Bill 143 also includes the regulatory authority to further reduce the number of children unlicensed providers can care for in the future, and it stipulates that the number of children permitted in licensed home-based care must always be at least one child greater than the number allowed in unlicensed care. These measures are intended to provide incentives for unlicensed providers to join the licensed sector. It would now be to a provider's advantage to become licensed. We want to help increase access to licensed home-based options.

Likewise, a child's safety is of the utmost importance, and this legislation is strong in that regard.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would also help parents make informed decisions about their child's care

by clarifying what programs require a licence and what programs are exempt. In some cases, Speaker, that's currently a little bit grey. Our goal is to place an emphasis on the standards and protections of the licensed system for children under four years of age, as they are a more vulnerable group, and allow some flexibility for older children where parents can make informed choices about their child's care.

In addition to clarifying when a licence is required, the proposed legislation also sets out greater criteria for individuals applying for a licence to support high-quality and viable child care options. The grounds for refusing, renewing or revoking a licence would include:

The applicant is not competent.

Past conduct indicates the applicant will not operate within the law.

The accommodation in which the child care would take place does not comply with the requirements.

The applicant has made a false statement.

There has been no change in circumstances where a licence was previously revoked or refused.

Advice from a service manager, First Nation or local authority indicates that the licence would authorize child care in an area inconsistent with the local service plan.

There is a failure to comply with a protection order and/or prescribed requirement, or a failure to pay an administrative penalty.

You can see that there's quite an explicit list.

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can we check quorum, please?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker.

As I was saying, we want providers to clearly understand when a child care licence is required, and we want it to be clear when a licence will be granted or renewed, or when it can be refused or revoked. Again, our top priority is ensuring the safety and well-being of Ontario's children, and a robust licensing regime will help us to do just that.

Building on these licensing requirements, another way we can increase oversight in the child sector is by empowering inspectors. If passed, this legislation would allow for the appointment of inspectors who are employees of the province. The legislation would set out the powers and duties of inspectors, including the authority to enter a location without a warrant in certain circumstances. As employees of the province, inspectors would also have powers and duties that include the power to examine records, demand documents and remove or copy records, and to use data storage equipment on the prem-

ises, take photos and video recordings, and question people on matters relevant to the inspection.

They would have the power to request criminal reference checks from the licensee or a person who has applied for a licence, their employees, a person who provides home child care and persons where there are reasonable grounds that an individual has committed certain violations.

A requirement to provide a report to the child care provider would also be made of the inspector.

Speaker, whether it is creating new enforcement tools, increasing access to licensed care, increasing oversight or clarifying when a licence is required, this proposed legislation is necessary. It is necessary to modernize the child care and early years system in Ontario and it is necessary to ensure parents have access to a responsive, high-quality and accessible child care and early years system.

But this legislation goes even further. In 2011, our government made a commitment to make sure all schools offer after-school programs for children aged six to 12 once full-day kindergarten is fully in place. As I said, that will take place this fall.

0920

To support this, in addition to repealing and replacing the outdated Day Nurseries Act, Bill 143 would also amend the Education Act. The proposed amendments to the Education Act would place a duty on school boards to ensure programs are offered for children six to 12 years old, where there is sufficient demand. This is similar to the current requirement for schools with full-day kindergarten to offer before and after child care for four- and five-year-olds. Currently we find that 62% of schools with full-day kindergarten are in fact providing this sort of care at the request of parents, and that 62% number is on the rise as more and more programs are introduced. This act would enable boards to offer developmentally responsible before- and after-school programs either directly, if they wish, or, what tends to happen more commonly, through a third-party provider. This would build on the success of full-day kindergarten and would help meet the needs of children as they grow and progress through school.

In addition to amending the Education Act, this legislation would also amend the Early Childhood Educators Act. The proposed amendments are based on feedback we received last fall as part of the five-year statutory review of the Early Childhood Educators—or ECE—Act. This aligns with the proposed changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act as we introduced in Bill 103, the Protecting Students Act.

The proposed amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act include clarifying the requirements for registration as a member of the College of ECEs. This means mandatory membership for all qualified persons working within a defined scope of practice. It would include providing the college with the authority to accredit ECE programs in post-secondary institutions and other bodies, and to accredit ongoing education pro-

grams. It would strengthen information sharing and reporting between the College of ECEs, employers and the ministry to support enforcement and oversight. These proposed changes to the ECE Act would help the College of Early Childhood Educators protect the public interest. The amendments would enhance the college's ability to support our common goals for child care in the early years system.

Another essential part of this legislation is that it reflects valuable input from our stakeholders. We began consultations in 2012 and received over 400 submissions during our consultation period, from municipalities, child care providers, First Nations, child care advocates, other child care and early years partners, and of course from parents. This was an extremely important step in the development of this transformative bill. We wanted to hear directly from stakeholders and they also wanted to be heard. They're the caregivers, the families, the communities and the advocates that play an essential role in the care of Ontario's children. Speaker, we listened to stakeholders. We valued their input and we heard what they were asking for. Without their feedback, this bill would have been incomplete.

Ontario's child care and early years system has served us well, but it hasn't fundamentally changed since the 1980s. That is why we need this important legislation to pass quickly: to modernize and build a high-quality system that is seamless and more responsive to parents' needs. This has been our commitment all along.

In the 2013 speech from the throne, we committed to a more comprehensive and integrated child care and early years system. In our 2011 election platform, we pledged to modernize Ontario's child care system, as well as ensuring schools had before- and after-school programs for children aged six to 12 once FDK was fully implemented. In the summer of 2012, we held public consultations on our proposed vision, through the discussion paper *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*. And in January 2013, we released the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework. This outlined a vision and strategic direction for a high-quality early years system that better meets the needs of Ontario families.

In Ontario, we are recognized for our world-class education system, and the proposed Child Care Modernization Act is a testament to how far we have come and how we can lead in child care and early years programs.

I've outlined why we need this legislation, what it will do and how it will help improve child care and early years services in our great province. That's why I encourage all members of this House to support the Child Care Modernization Act. Ontario's children and families cannot wait any longer. They cannot wait for a system that is more responsive to their needs. They cannot wait for a system that better reflects the realities of our modern world. They cannot wait for us to strengthen oversight in the child care sector. They cannot wait for access to safe, modern care that gives children what they need most.

The Child Care Modernization Act is transformative, and it will build on the proven success of our education,

child care and early years systems. It will position Ontario as a future leader in these essential areas, and it will eliminate the problems caused by the current patchwork of rules and regulations.

It is critical that this bill pass quickly, so I look forward to the support of all members in this House on this very important piece of legislation, and I look forward to continuing the great work we have already done to modernize the child care and early years services in Ontario. By passing this important bill, we can deliver on a promise that will benefit everyone in this province and contribute to our future prosperity.

In the spirit of partnership, I urge all MPPs to stand up and do what is best for our children. Without question, we need a child care and early years system that gives children the best possible start in life, and the Child Care Modernization Act will help us do just that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I listened intently to the minister's lead on this important piece of legislation, Bill 143, the Child Care Modernization Act. I noticed, at the end of her comments today, she had stated three, four or five times that we cannot wait for further changes to child care. I will note, with particular emphasis, that we've waited quite some time for these changes to occur.

I remember when I was first elected to the Legislature in October 2011. Shortly thereafter, I met with child care providers in my riding and in the region of Waterloo, because they had a particular issue with the rollout of full-day kindergarten. At that time, they were looking for a response to modernizing child care, and the response that they received was that the modernization was going to occur through regulation and not through legislation. So I'm pleased that the government has finally listened to folks in the sector who have highlighted certain problems with the legislation.

Of course, we all lament the tragic deaths of three infants, in the care of others, that occurred in the province of Ontario in our recent memory. I think that is certainly a tragedy we want to avoid. Safety has to be one of our foremost concerns when we're talking about children in care. It certainly will be something that I'll be talking about in my lead following the comments today.

I listened intently to the minister. I accept that these are broad-based changes that she has proposed. I will continue this conversation in a few minutes, when I get to do my lead.

I've never had a piece of legislation that provides so much feedback from parents and providers. I think that we should take stock of what they're saying and the effect that this legislation is going to have on them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I rise to say a few words about this bill, thank you. As a grandparent of two granddaughters currently in child care, this bill certainly has my attention.

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But at this point, I'm not sure that the bill addresses the overarching problem, namely the lack of affordable, accessible and safe child care. It also doesn't ensure that each and every complaint received about child care will be investigated, and it does nothing to ensure that there are enough inspectors to do the job.

I know when we bring forth legislation such as this, it can be embellished and improved upon. I would hope at some point that we can all get together and look at the inadequacies of the bill so far and do our best to try and improve it.

I think, on this side of the House as well, we're also a little concerned about the increasing group sizes in child care. The bill increases the number of kids in licensed child care from a maximum of five to six, or even 12 if two providers are working together.

We're also very concerned about concurrent changes this Liberal government is making through regulation. The effect of these proposed regulatory changes to child-staff ratios is to allow younger children to receive care in even larger groups. Those proposed regulation changes are causing great concern in the child care advocacy community.

Those are just a few of the concerns that we have on this side of the House. I hope we can address them as we continue the dialogue, and I look forward to the member from Cambridge, to hear his comments and reaction to this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just wanted to comment on the minister's opening comments about the Child Care Modernization Act. I think, at the end of the day, everybody in this House wants to strengthen the oversight of the province's unlicensed child care sector. It's certainly something that comes to mind, particularly when there's the potential of a child being at risk. I think that certainly if this legislation was passed, it would provide some comfort to families across the province that the province has got the administrative powers and penalties to put in place, the encouragement to do the right thing and to take care of our children.

I think the penalties certainly are a deterrent, and certainly we want to make sure that people who run an unlicensed daycare—that the families know what the rules are going in and they know the right questions to ask. This proposed legislation would provide some clarification about what programs and activities are exempt from licensing requirements, whether it's babysitters or nannies or camps, and it would require that all private schools that care for more than five children under four be licensed.

Also, it provides some flexibility. It helps address amending the Education Act to ensure that school boards that offer before- and after-school programs for six- to 12-year-olds could be delivered directly by boards or by third-party providers.

At the end of the day, we want to ensure that families have access to safe and modern child care. It's part of our

government's plan to invest in people, and, at the end of the day, we want to give our children and our families the best possible start in a safe environment.

I think that this proposed legislation builds on steps we've already taken with regard to the oversight of child care, including the creation of a dedicated enforcement team to investigate complaints against unlicensed providers and the development of an online searchable database to validate companies. This is about making our families safer and our children safer, and we think it's part of a plan to invest in families and children across the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a significant bill technically, Bill 143. In a lot of respects, I think we'll find some kind of agreement on many of the issues raised. Safe, modern access to care is very important.

Now, the whole thing is access; that's got to be important for families. Can they afford it, as well? Respecting the rights of the family is important, as well, to have choice. As a parent myself, with 10 grown children, of course, and 10 grandchildren, I'm very proud to say that my wife is a retired teacher, but she made the choice, the decision, to stay home and make sure our children had care.

The families themselves, I think, need to step up to those responsibilities as well. They should be included in this dialogue.

When you look at the five different schedules, it amends the Child Care and Early Years Act in schedule A. Schedule B amends the Day Nurseries Act, and schedule C, the Early Childhood Educators Act from 2007. Schedule D is the Education Act itself.

These are broad and sweeping changes. I'm very confident—and I'm looking forward to listening to our member from Cambridge, our critic, also a parent. He and his wife are both professional people; he is a professor, a teacher at university. I suspect that choice will be an important thing.

Now, let's not become too soaked in motherhood statements in all of this. All of us want choice and, most importantly, safety. Safety is important. In the response to some of the things the minister—the context is important as well, to make sure that there are regulations with respect to operators, and disclosures with respect to who is providing the care. All of that is quite acceptable to our side. Access to affordable, safe child care and choice for families is important.

I look forward to the member from Cambridge's remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Education, you have two minutes for a response.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members for Cambridge and Windsor—Tecumseh, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the member from Durham, for their comments.

I wanted to touch briefly on something that the member from Cambridge said, because he talked about some

of the pressures that have occurred in child care with the introduction of full-day kindergarten.

I think some of the requests he was referring to were that people who were currently in the business of providing child care said, "We'd like to be able to be child care providers in school with the before-and-after programs in schools." In fact, our government did respond to that and made the changes in the Education Act and the regulations that allowed third-party providers to be the providers of before-and-after child care. As I noted in my speech, 62% of the schools with full-day kindergarten are providing before-and-after programs for four- and five-year-olds, and those are largely provided by third parties. So that's actually an example of our government listening to what people in the sector had to say.

I also wanted to comment on the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. We certainly understand that it is absolutely crucial that we provide follow-up to every complaint that we receive. Starting in January 2013, when you look at our record of doing that, it is very much better than it used to be. When we go back and look at the records, there has been a dramatic improvement in follow-up.

The legislation also allows for the hiring of additional inspectors whose sole role would be inspecting child care. Right now, those people who do those inspections have other duties as well as following up complaints, so it actually allows us to up our workforce in that area.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm going to try to get through my hour-long lead with the Darth Vader voice. I seem to have lost it. I don't really know why or how, because my throat actually doesn't hurt. But for some reason, I have a little bit of an issue with the tone of the voice, so I'm going to try my radio voice here, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that members of the Legislature will, hopefully, not fall asleep with what I've been saying.

I mentioned in my comments to the minister that this piece of legislation has perhaps received more attention than any other piece of legislation I've actually seen in this Legislature, which I think is an incredibly positive story. I want to say that, because people are interested.

As a parent—I have kids aged six, three and almost one—I think that child care in the age bracket that I'm in is a very important concern for families, so it's important that we actually spend the time—not rushing through this debate, but actually spending the time—to make sure that the massive modernization that this bill interjects and injects into our system is done at precisely the right pace and in the right context as well.

I know that the minister and the ministry have begun a public comment phase on their website on this particular piece of legislation and the regulations that came into effect, I believe, last December with respect to ratio changes in our child care centres. I want members of the public to understand that they still have an opportunity to provide that public feedback on this piece of legislation, and I would encourage them to do so. Obviously, I'm

saying that in the context that the deadline, I believe, is at the end of this month, which is at the end of next week, so I encourage them to do so.

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We're not going to be debating it with the benefit of reading that public feedback, but thank goodness that hundreds of moms and dads, hundreds of child care providers, hundreds of ECEs have taken the liberty to write their personal thoughts on this particular piece of legislation and how it affects their perspective on child care and the provision of child care in this province. I think it's important to take stock of what they're saying. They're raising some specific issues, some of which have been mentioned, particularly with safety. I know the minister is very preoccupied by that, as I think all members of this Legislature are.

I know the member for Durham touched on a few others in terms of choice and trust. These are very critical elements to why parents choose particular modes of care, whether it's licensed, non-profit care, whether it's a parent or a relative providing care, whether it's the neighbourhood child care provider who the family has grown to love and to trust. I think all those aspects have to be considered in the context of what we're talking about today.

Of course, all members of this Legislature want to ensure the health and well-being of our children. As a parent, that is my primary concern. I think I can speak for most, if not all, parents; that each and every day they try as hard as they can to pursue an environment where their kids can thrive, and I think that is a very important element. Certainly, with this bill, we get to have that debate about what that can contain.

If I look at what my friends, the people in my age bracket who have kids who are similar in age to my own kids, are doing, there is—I think I have covered all the bases, perhaps, with the exception of for-profit child care, with families that are actually using different modes of child care.

I have to say that my family is alone in the fact that we actually use a licensed non-profit child care centre, among my friends and siblings who use child care, so I obviously come to this debate with a little bit of bias. I really love and enjoy and trust the licensed child care provider for my children, but I have to also say that the availability of such child care centres is very limited in rural Ontario. I live in a village of about 3,000. I have to drive my child to an urban centre to get the care that I think is adequate for my child, and I do that willingly; I'm not asking for a difference.

But we have to acknowledge some of the constraints, that changes in our legislation have an effect on rural Ontario. I think it's very important to bring that up, and I expect particularly members of the official opposition to reflect upon how this piece of legislation might impact rural Ontario, particularly for members who have a far more rural jurisdiction than my own; I have about a 95% urban population and about 5% is rural. So I think we have to consider the context with that.

The question is, why are people choosing the different modes of child care that they're choosing? I think that's important. I want to begin the discussion by explaining or exploring a little bit about why people are making the choices in care that they're making. I know a family that doesn't trust a whole lot of people except mom and dad, so the grandparents are caring for their children. That one is actually my brother. He's not choosing that because of monetary reasons. He certainly can afford child care, but he trusts mom and dad to provide child care for his kids, and so they do. We have to obviously understand that is certainly a choice that parents make.

I have one of my best friends. He's using a child care provider for his kids that essentially was his child care provider when he was a kid, so there was a trust that was developed. He thrived in that environment and he wanted his kids to thrive in that environment as well, so he chose the neighbourhood child care provider that cared for him when he was a kid. She's still doing it. She's an amazing lady. That's an important aspect. I think people develop these relationships and this trust.

Others will cite as their primary motivation for using what has been termed "informal child care" as based upon those relationships and based on that trust, that friends who now have one parent who's staying home trust that family because their values are similar to theirs.

Or perhaps there's a variety of other reasons, location and so on and so forth, and the flexibility and time, because child care sometimes requires standardized care between certain hours of operation, which may be different than what average individuals are working. If you're working particularly later at night, sometimes licensed child care is not going to provide the flexibility for you and your family.

So we have to be concerned about all of these aspects of care when we're analyzing this bill. Of course, I know the government really wants to rectify some of the lax conditions in our child care centres, and the substandard safety provisions that exist therein. I applaud the government for applying some of those ideas in this piece of legislation, but we can't ignore what is happening in our communities with people that I know who are accessing child care.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm the only one in my peer group who is using a licensed child care centre. That's because the statistics actually show that 80% of kids in care are actually being taken care of in the informal child care sector. This piece of legislation affects 80% of kids, so we have to take care and concern for what we are going to speak about.

I wanted to begin my discussion today by highlighting the fact that people make their child care choices with a number of different considerations and we have to take stock of what those considerations are when we're deliberating about this piece of legislation.

I will state very clearly that our priorities in child care are first and foremost for the safety, the health and well-being of our children. We have to be concerned about that. But we're also concerned about three other principles and values.

The first is choice. It's not in any particular order; I'm just going to state precisely what they are. Choice is one of those concerns. There are a number of different reasons, as I've just mentioned, why someone would choose to use one form of care over another. I chose a licensed child care centre because it was the centre that I could trust the most. It's not the same for everybody else. The availability of spaces in licensed child care centres, as the member for Windsor—Tecumseh has already outlined, are not necessarily there for everyone who wants to use them. But for me there was a choice and I was able to use it, and I love the child care centre that we are a part of. We have a very good relationship with not only our care providers but the administrators of the child care centre and of the whole organization.

People have different reasons for choosing. People don't necessarily trust the idea that they're going to send their child to a strip mall to be cared for. They like the idea that their child is going to be in the care and love of a family, in a family's home, in a setting that is conducive for that. That's certainly somebody's choice, and we should be enabling that choice and not curtailing that choice. There's some degree of the latter with respect to this bill, that this push is certainly to incentivize, as the minister has suggested, the push for licensed child care, which is certainly going to be a concern.

Which raises another point, Mr. Speaker, the third after the safety and choice principles that we are very concerned about, and that's affordability. There are a lot of families in the province of Ontario who choose informal care because they can afford it. If you can pay \$25 or \$30 a day for care in a home-based setting versus \$40 or \$50 a day for care in a licensed child care setting—there is certainly a cost associated that's prohibitive for families. If we're pushing more children into the licensed sector, it's obviously going to have an economic impact on the families.

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So affordability—we have to be very concerned about what's happening with respect to that, because even though you're in a home-based environment, once you associate yourself with a licensing agency, there are fees that are going to have to be transitioned from that home-based care centre to actually be accredited and licensed by an agency. There's a cost associated with that. That cost is not going to be absorbed by the child care provider; it's going to be absorbed by the families themselves. So we have to be concerned about the effect this piece of legislation is going to have on the affordability of child care in the province of Ontario.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would also suggest that accessibility of child care has to be a concern. I mentioned already that there is an issue between availability and accessibility of child care in urban versus rural settings. I'm sure members of our caucus are going to elaborate more with particular reference to what's happening in their own constituencies. But if we are tinkering with ratios and if we are tinkering with the viability of child care in the informal sector, we're actually going to re-

duce the number of places that are going to be available for children to be cared for.

I realize the government's trying to increase the licensed spaces, trying to provide more licensed spaces—and I applaud them for trying that—but the effect is that we're going to have a reduction that far exceeds that increase in the informal care sector. Remember, four in five kids are being cared for in the informal sector today. If that's the case, we might be heading into, with this particular piece of legislation, a shortage of spaces in child care, if what folks are telling us is true, which is that the viability of informal care will no longer be there. Those are some of the principles that guide our assessment of what we're going to be doing and debating through the course of this particular piece of legislation.

But I have to say, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has concerned me is that this isn't the first time that we've seen tragic events transpire in Ontario society that may have been averted if the government had been simply doing their job to begin with. I have serious concerns with the fact that we've had children that have tragically died in care in the province of Ontario, and, on the basis of that, the basis of the government's neglect to investigate certain complaints, we've had these tragedies emerge. I'll point to some articles in the newspaper.

I want to say that I remember when I was a professor—actually, when I was a teaching assistant prior to receiving my PhD—I was involved in a course. There was an experiential learning component to it, which actually studied the tragedies that were happening in our nursing homes. We were doing this probably about eight or nine years ago. Those tragedies—the abuse, the mental health abuse—actually parlayed itself into legislation, which was Bill 140, an act with respect to long-term care, which happened in 2007.

I know that regulations were reinforced in 2011 with respect to nursing homes when we talked about some of the tragic conditions that our seniors were living in in these nursing homes. The fact that their diapers weren't being changed and the inadequacies of the food rations that they were receiving and the medications that weren't being properly distributed—these are certainly tragedies that become exposed through cases that are brought to the attention of the media or the Ombudsman or individual members of this Legislature.

I recognize that these tragic events that happened in the last year have certainly provided increased stimulus on the part of the government to act on something that has not been changed in almost 30 years in terms of the provision of child care in the province of Ontario. So with the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, I will disagree with the minister's suggesting that the government actually has acted, when we haven't really seen the regulatory or legislative changes necessary to avert crises like this.

I will say, too, that I think the greatest thing that we can offer as a Legislature is to educate parents on what they should be doing and what they should be asking when they're looking for appropriate care for their

children. The fact that a parent would actually be okay with leaving their children in a centre that they themselves cannot enter, I think, speaks volumes about the work we need to do to educate parents to say that you should have access to your child 100% of the time, and access to the premises where your child is being cared for whenever you want. You are the parent of that child. I think we have a lot to do in terms of educating, and I appreciate the aspects of the legislation that we're talking about today that specifically focus on this.

We have to look at the context of what this bill is being made of. I know there has been a series of articles that have been addressing this particular issue. For example, there was the one death in Vaughan that occurred, where inspectors “found garbage with dirty diapers in the kitchen; expired or rotting food in the fridge and freezer; unsanitized toys; evidence of inadequate hand-washing or dishwashing capacity; and other sanitation concerns” at the home. This was the result of a freedom-of-information request.

As the article states—this article is dated September 20, 2013, published in the *Toronto Star*—“one family is alleging their three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, who was toilet-trained, was made to wear diapers and belted into a car seat while watching TV unsupervised in the basement of the daycare. The family said their child often smelled like a dog when she came home.”

You read stories like this and, certainly, as a parent, you feel for individuals who are faced with those kinds of conditions. If the allegations are in fact true, there are serious problems with not only the legislation but the investigative capacity of the ministry.

This article, dated July 19, 2013, states: “Ontario's Ministry of Education keeps the complaint history of unlicensed home daycares secret from the public unless they file a freedom-of-information request....” I have a concern about that, because if the government is in fact retaining this information and not doing anything about it, then there are certainly serious concerns. I appreciate the fact that this legislation tries to rectify that in terms of making some of these complaints public and a registry available for people to consider some of the concerns.

This actually prompted the provincial Ombudsman to launch an investigation on the complaints-based system and the oversight of child care in Ontario.

The article goes on to state that “when complaints are filed against unlicensed daycares, the ministry issues a letter ordering the operator to stop breaking the child-limit rule,” which was the only regulation imposed, according to the legislation. I know that this legislation, of course, tries to rectify that particular issue, which is, I think, long overdue.

This article, dated November 26, 2013, in the *Toronto Star*, states that “the province inspected nearly 300 unlicensed daycare businesses between July 2012 and July 2013. The inspection reports obtained by the *Star* detail a series of health and safety concerns noted by inspectors, including soggy bedding, unfenced pools and lax supervision—even at daycares deemed legal”—which I found very surprising.

Obviously, we have to do a whole lot better of a job, whether that's an instance where people simply don't know what the regulations are—common sense doesn't dictate that, and we have to do a better job educating those folks that are providing that care.

It's completely unacceptable that we actually have retained these pieces of information and nothing really gets done about it. That is a very big concern for me, because what this piece of legislation, Bill 143, does is say that we have a number of criteria we have to assess in terms of ensuring safe and healthy environments for our kids. But who exactly is going to inspect them? Those inspections: If they get details, what are they going to do? How many more inspectors is the government going to employ? What is the budget of these extra inspectors, and where can we find that kind of information? I think those details are important, because they provide parents with the security that something's going to be done if a complaint is made or if a proactive inspection turns up some particular issues.

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The history to date isn't very welcoming. I believe the government is quite embarrassed by what has transpired in child care centres with inspections that they have done, and have done very little to rectify.

This article dated November 23 states, "Ministry of Education files ... show in about 40% of cases, caregivers were looking after more than five children under age 10, not including their own," which is a violation of the Day Nurseries Act. So, again, there are instances where the regulations actually were in place, but not enough was done to fix those problems. Incredibly, "The violations ranged from caregivers with six kids, eight kids, 11 kids, and as many as 14 children" in one Toronto home, which happened last April.

Again, we're highlighting some issues with the current system and the inadequacies of it but, more importantly, there are instances where the government has investigated and stepped in and little has changed. So how can we have the confidence that things will change with this particular piece of legislation? I'm not given the confidence, based on the fact that the government hasn't been able to do their job with the minimal regulations that were in place before. Now we're adding more, and we need the confidence that the government is going to be able to do its job, provide those investigations and move forward.

Finally, the last article I'm going to highlight—there's obviously lots to talk about here, but this is another Toronto Star article, on January 16, 2014, which outlines that "Ontario Education Ministry Wants Daycare Death Lawsuit Tossed" out of court. It states that it "does not owe the plaintiff—the dead toddler's family—a 'duty of care....'"

I'm kind of concerned about that statement with respect to the provision of child care in our communities, and if the government feels it has a duty to provide care or it doesn't. Certainly, as late as January of this year, we have some comment that it doesn't, in that particular

case, have a duty to provide care. I wonder if this legislation is going to change that, because obviously the legislation is intended to be much more proactive with its inspections. It sets out further regulation with respect to the kinds of things inspectors can write up a provider of child care for with an offence, and severely stiffens the penalties that will be placed upon violators of Bill 143, should it be enacted into law. Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to say that we have some concerns that the government's not doing the work that we have asked it to do to begin with.

I don't want to be overly negative about the legislation. There are aspects of the legislation, of course, that we do support. As I mentioned, I think, a couple of times at least, we are going to be in favour of any way that we can strengthen the health, safety and well-being of our children. I'll continue to say that because it obviously is what we're here to do.

Let me talk a bit about some of the positive things that I think are important but nevertheless should be debated.

Obviously, one of the things this piece of legislation does is empower an inspector to inspect, without a warrant, a premises where child care is being provided or any premises where the inspector, on reasonable grounds, suspects that child care is provided.

I do know that there are going to be certain folks who are going to question the indiscriminate nature of having access to a private premises "on reasonable grounds" without outlining what those reasonable grounds may consist of. I think that debate is warranted. We should actually talk about that, because it is important. But I think that we do have to have some balance at some point in terms of a person's property and the health and well-being of children who are under their care. I think we are going to have a debate on that.

I do understand the legal rationale for inserting this into legislation, to make sure that if someone is at risk, we do everything we can to rectify the situation, but I do say that acknowledging that there are concerns that I think individuals may have with the potentially indiscriminate nature of these inspections. I'll let those folks make those points as they wish.

An inspector or director who believes on reasonable grounds that there is an imminent threat to a child can order the child care provider to stop providing child care. I think that obviously is going to severely improve the care and the safety of our children. If there's an imminent threat, whether it's some of those disgusting sanitary conditions that we saw, particularly with the home in Vaughan that was investigated—I think that we have an obligation to make sure that our kids are in a safe environment, and if that environment is not that child care centre, that we make sure that we get in there, stop the issue from getting worse, and try to remedy it as quickly as possible.

Of course, I know some folks are going to say that indiscriminately closing child care centres may affect families because they're going to have to find care for those kids who are now left without care, but, again, if our

interest is to make sure that safety is a priority, we obviously have a duty to at least stop bad places from operating. Obviously, I think there are provisions in here for a registry of sorts to emerge.

The third point: I think the publication of information section in this piece of legislation is a very good way to help parents make informed choices about child care providers. It could be an alternative to regulation, of course; instead, creating a marketplace that publishes information about the child care provider's qualifications, the age ratios, experience etc. in an easily comparable way. We can use the Internet to publicize this—that's easily accessible to families—to provide that kind of information.

It prohibits a person from providing care if they've been convicted under this act or a variety of criminal charges, or if they have been part of disciplinary hearings of another regulatory body like the association regulating early childhood educators. I think that's obviously a positive piece of legislation.

One that I will note that contrasts a little bit with what we didn't see in the Ontario College of Teachers Act is the ability to reinstate folks five years after being convicted of a criminal offence, which is a concern we have with that particular piece of legislation, so I'll note the inconsistency. I much like and much prefer having a person who has been convicted or has been removed from a regulatory body to have no access to the care of children, because I think that's certainly something that will improve the safety of children.

Going in with the first part, the provider cannot prevent a parent from accessing his or her child: I think this is just basic common sense as a parent. I wouldn't leave my child in any place I didn't have access to. Again, I think there's an educative component here, whereby parents should know what their rights are. They should know they should have access. They should know they should receive a receipt. These particular elements of this legislation—I call them parental rights or family rights—are good elements to this bill that I think we would consider very positive aspects as well.

Having said that, I do have some concerns with the legislation that I will share. I know I won't have a whole lot of time to share these concerns before we break before question period, but this bill proposes a licensing scheme that we believe would reduce parental choice. Informal child care providers, which provide the majority of care, 80% of care, are concerned that the legislation will mean that they can provide fewer spaces, especially to children under the age of two, and will be subjected to having to obtain a sublicence from a home care agency, which will increase costs. Those two elements—again, accessibility of space and cost—are certainly elements that we are concerned about.

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Mr. Speaker, this provision for children under the age of two is one that we shouldn't neglect. It is a challenge to find child care from the ages of zero to two for families. We have families who are self-employed, and if

they're self-employed and they haven't been contributing to their employment insurance, they don't have maternity benefits like everybody else, and therefore may not be able to take a whole year off from work for simply providing for their family.

Care for children under the age of 18 months, now under the age of two, is already at a shortage. There aren't spaces available. For licensed child care centres, the cost is so prohibitive that they actually don't offer licensed child care; not many facilities offer licensed child care for those between the ages of zero and 18 months. I will note that the minister has changed the regulations on ratios for these centres to suggest that the ratios will change for children ages zero to one and one to two, which may have some effect on the availability of spaces—and I'll get to that in a few moments. But our concern here is for those children under the age of two. If there is going to be a limited number of spaces for them, then availability of space is going to be curtailed, and we have serious reservations with respect to that.

The increased cost and decreased space issue will force many families to shut down rather than seek a licence, causing a reduction in care or increasing costs, or both. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that by licensing, you're going to have to raise your fees. Licensing means that the child care provider will take in less money.

Reducing the number of kids that are going to be in the care of those providers makes the viability of informal care very difficult. Again, we're talking about a sector of child care that provides care for the vast majority of children in the province of Ontario: 80% of kids, four in five children, are in the care of the informal sector. We have to be concerned and very careful about what we do to alter that.

Yes, there might be some more persuaded to license, and so there might be a slight increase in the availability of licensed child care spaces. We are changing the ratio from 1 to 5 for licensed home-based child care centres to 1 to 6. I recognize that that is an increase, but if the viability simply isn't there for everybody else, then there is concern.

If members of this Legislature have been listening to and reading the information being provided by their informal child care providers in their own ridings—and I appreciate all those child care providers in other ridings who have also included me in their very thoughtful analysis of this piece of legislation. If we're listening to them, we have to be concerned about the viability of child care in our informal sector. I think this problem is going to be more acute in rural Ontario than it is going to be in urban Ontario. We have to be concerned about that as well.

There are many families who take the time, who make the economic decision, to stay at home with their kids—many families. In order to make that decision easier for them, they take on other children in their neighbourhood to provide care. I want to state that the vast majority of these child care providers are very good at what they do. Families trust them. They become an extended part of a

family. That child care provider is as important to the child, in many cases, as the parent. So choosing that child care provider is a painstaking task for parents. If we're now going to say and make that economic decision for people to stay at home with their own kids more difficult, we are going to limit the availability of space in child care right across the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket—I mean, from Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Oak Ridges—Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oak Ridges—Markham. Joe threw me off.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please help me welcome, in the east members' gallery, Manuela Di Re. She was legal counsel for many years at the York region health services department.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to introduce two people from my riding. Dawn Miskelly is the manager of the Elgin County Railway Museum. The railway capital of Canada is St. Thomas. Ian Raven is the curator of the Elgin Military Museum, which purchased a submarine last year. I invite all the MPPs to visit Port Burwell and visit our sub.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to welcome Nicole Goodbrand, who is with us here today in the gallery. She is a student at Huron University College and is job-shadowing me today. Her family is from the good riding of Brant.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Museum Association to Queen's Park today. I'm pleased to welcome Henriette Riegel and Megan Lafrenière from the Diefbunker Museum in Ottawa, and Alexandra Badzak from the Ottawa Art Gallery.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to welcome everyone here today for the Ontario museums day at Queen's Park. They're going to have their reception tonight downstairs from 5 to 7. I have Darren Levstek, the museum and Nature's Place curator from Minden Hills Museum in my riding. Darren, stand up. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'd like to welcome Matthew Lopez here, a young man who lives in my riding, a fourth-year student interested in policy and politics. He's here to observe the proceedings of the day and see how we work.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm here today to introduce Slobodan Grmsu from my riding, a wonderful volunteer, very interested in politics. Welcome.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd also like to welcome Julia Fielding, who is the executive director of the Clarington

Museums and Archives. Welcome, Julia, and thank you for the work in our community.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome as well, from Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol, Emily Beliveau; and from Bruce County Museum, executive director Cathy McGirr.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to introduce two people who came to visit me this morning from the Ontario Museum Association: Jenn Nelson, social media and public history, Ontario; and Dr. Terri-Lynn Brennan from the city of Kingston, who was also the LA for Noble Villeneuve back in 1998. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome David Marskell from THEMUSEUM in Kitchener, a very successful museum. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome Kelley Swift Jones, curator of the Simcoe County Museum in Midhurst, Ontario.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to extend a special welcome to Catherine Richards. Catherine Richards is the manager and curator for the Aurora Historical Society and Hillary House National Historic Site. Welcome to Catherine.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Heather Hughes, assistant curator of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move unanimous consent that the Legislature wishes the best of luck to our Canadian athletes who are representing Canada this weekend, especially our women's and men's hockey teams and our women's and men's curling teams, and especially Ontario's own Brad Jacobs from Sault Ste. Marie, who is going for the gold. I'd like to get the Legislature to wish them unanimous consent for best of luck from Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence is seeking unanimous consent to offer our best and thanks to the Olympic teams mentioned and the individual mentioned. Do we agree? We have unanimous consent of congratulations. That's wonderful. Thank you.

The member from Sudbury.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you, Speaker. I want to introduce four young people. They represent 4MY Canada and they're meeting with MPPs. They met with me this morning and they are incredible individuals. I'd like to introduce Lia Milousis, Mia Thomas, Neville Brown and Jonathan Gale. Welcome and thank you for the work you do.

Mr. Michael Harris: I too would like to welcome David Marskell from Kitchener—Waterloo's own THEMUSEUM, as well as Tom Reitz from Waterloo Region Museum in the great riding of Kitchener—Conestoga. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Scott Gillies. Scott is the curator of the Ingersoll Cheese and Agricultural Museum in the great city of Ingersoll. Thank you very much.

Mr. Todd Smith: I see a couple of members from the Ontario Museum Association here as well this morning: Terri-Lynn Brennan and Jenn Nelson. Welcome to Queen's Park and question period.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each caucus to address the situation in Ukraine.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to offer an opportunity to speak about the situation in Ukraine. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Like all Ontarians, I am deeply disturbed and saddened by the events that have been unfolding in Ukraine. Over the past few months, the world has been witness to increasing violence against peaceful demonstrators seeking democracy and a better quality of life.

The past few days have been particularly brutal due to an escalation of violence in Kiev which has shocked us all. Despite media reports yesterday that President Viktor Yanukovich pledged to end the violence, today the situation has escalated further and more demonstrators have been killed. Already enormous damage has been done; many lives have been tragically lost.

On behalf of the government of Ontario and my colleagues, I would like to express my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the victims of these tragic events and to the people of Ukraine.

Ontario is a very diverse province, which includes a strong and vibrant Ukrainian community, a community that has a large presence in many of our ridings. Last night, I had the opportunity to speak with some of the leaders in Ontario's Ukrainian community to pass along our heartfelt support for their efforts. We all know a member of the Ukrainian community who is watching these events with mounting concern and anguish. Our hearts go out to those families and friends in the region.

I'm pleased to see that the Canadian government has been engaged with Ukrainian non-governmental organizations to provide medical supplies. However, I'm mindful that there is more that could be done to help the situation. I hope that the federal government will enact immediate targeted sanctions toward those responsible and that the federal government will use its considerable international influence to convince international partners, in particular the countries of the European Union, to likewise implement sanctions against those responsible for the killings and human rights abuses.

In addition, I call on the federal government to deploy Canadian observers to Ukraine's hospitals and clinics, its courts and morgues. Ontario is ready to work in partner-

ship with the federal government on this front. This will help ensure the fair treatment of the demonstrators and the accurate reporting of the injuries and fatalities. These actions will serve as a reminder to those precipitating the violence that the world is not only watching but will act and will hold them responsible.

We, as community advocates, as leaders, as MPPs, have a responsibility to speak up when human rights are violated. This is why we stand today in solidarity with the members of the Ukrainian community and all Ontarians who seek a peaceful and democratic path for Ukraine and its people, who are striving with such courage for their dignity and freedom.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm grateful to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak to this important issue.

As the Premier has indicated, the violence that is taking place in Ukraine has far-reaching effects. Many Ukrainian Canadians in Etobicoke have family and friends that are being directly impacted by the situation that is unfolding in Ukraine, but so many more are concerned about freedom, democracy and opportunity, and they are concerned about Ukraine's future. I want them to know that our thoughts and our prayers are with them. While I'm hopeful that news of a potential truce may be a positive sign, there is still more work to do.

I join the Premier in calling for the federal government to take further action to ensure the safety of those in Ukraine. The simple steps that the Premier suggested could have a real and legitimate impact on the lives of those in need of protection. Because, as I have said, these events not only impact those who are living in Ukraine, but they also impact many of the people we all represent at Queen's Park. When events such as these occur, they impact all of us, but it's also an opportunity for us to reflect on the state of our own democracy and how blessed we truly are to live in Ontario and in Canada, a place where we have the privilege to sit in this House and to debate our different political views peacefully, respectfully and without fear of repercussions.

Indeed, this is a circumstance that we should remember more often, and that we should be very grateful for. That is why we have the obligation to speak out against violence and aggression of any kind and stand together today with the people of Ukraine. As a person of Ukrainian descent, I'm very grateful that the Premier has allowed me an opportunity to express this in solidarity, not only with my community, but with all of us who are of Ukrainian descent throughout Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further comment?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: For over 100 years, Ukrainians have been coming to Canada and Ontario as a way of building a life free from oppression and free to make a better life than was possible in Ukraine. They've come to this country and become building blocks for a nation that grew westward. They helped Canada build railways for the west to become the breadbasket for a continent. This

nation and this province would not exist as it does today without the contributions of the thousands of Ukrainian Canadians who have made it home.

Ukrainian Canadians like Roy Romanow and Ernie Eves have led provincial governments in this century, and in this century two Ukrainian Canadians, Ed Schreyer and Ray Hnatyshyn, have served as Her Majesty's representatives in Canada. The community has become entwined with the fabric and the future of Canadian society, but it has always done so with a careful and loving eye to events back in the old country. In the last century, Ukraine has struggled to make its own identity and forge its own future. Subject to Soviet domination, the extermination offence of the Holodomor, pogroms and invasions, they have held on to what it means to be Ukrainian.

We are now seeing daily images of violence and rioting in the streets of Kiev. Many Ukrainians have lost their lives, and hundreds more are injured. I would like to offer my condolences, and those of the entire PC caucus, to the families who have lost family members to the violence that's currently happening in Ukraine.

The people in the square in Kiev represent every faction of their country. They speak Russian and Ukrainian. They are young and they are old. They are Catholic; they are Orthodox; they are Jewish. But they are united by the fact that they believe the time is now for a free and independent Ukraine.

Riots that started out as a protest driven primarily by a young activist have evolved into a growing symbol of a national dream that has, for centuries, been deferred rather than realized. Through the protests, Canada has played a role. Our embassy has served as a safe haven for protestors fleeing violent crackdowns by riot police. The federal government has threatened sanctions against the government if the violence in Kiev does not stop. The federal government, following the lead set by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Minister Baird, has issued a statement saying that Canada continues to call on the government of Ukraine to work with the opposition and achieve a peaceful solution. Peace, freedom and the ability to assemble freely are at stake every day in the Euromaidan in Kiev.

In December, Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak joined thousands of Ukrainian Canadians as they protested the violence with a rally in Dundas Square. We share a common belief in freedom and that, for too long, the future of Ukraine has been decided by someone other than the Ukrainian people.

Despite a truce being called late Wednesday night by President Yanukovich and opposition leaders, we've seen an escalation of violence claiming at least 100 lives, and the numbers are growing. I want to echo the call of the federal government in demanding a permanent end to this ongoing violence and tragedy.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I would ask that the flag at Queen's Park be lowered in memory of the murdered innocent young activists, as we recognize today as an official day of mourning. It's time for the people of Ukraine to have what so many of their relatives have

found here in Ontario: peace, security, freedom and a future that they decide for themselves.

Slava Ukraini. Slava Ukraini. Slava Ukraini.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further comment?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour to rise in this House and to speak about this issue. It's also my honour and privilege to represent so many Ukrainian Canadians in my riding. It's been my honour and privilege to be the only MPP to have co-authored both Ukrainian heritage month and also the bill that recognized the Holodomor as a genocide, and I'm honoured by that.

I've also been honoured to be at those demonstrations at Dundas Square, at city hall and outside of the consul, and to stand shoulder to shoulder with those constituents of mine who have family in Ukraine and who mourn the events of Ukraine.

Let's just go over them: Over 30 people have been killed. This is a peaceful protest. The very rights that we recognize in Canada, as has been so eloquently stated already, are being trespassed. People are being shot in Maidan square in Kiev, and every day in my office I get an up-to-the-minute report of what's happening in that square.

One Professor Wynnyckyj has said that now they're using the "terrorist" word to describe the protestors. It's not just in Kiev; it's across Ukraine that this revolution is happening. He described it: "I spent a few hours on Independence Square today. Honestly—I couldn't find a single terrorist! I saw lots of young and middle-aged determined people who were genuinely trying to show brave faces, but in reality are fully cognizant of the futility of their fight against several thousand armed interior ministry fighters...." He said everyone in Kiev is coming to that square and supporting them with food. In fact, he said, "Please don't bring any more ... sausages; we have more meat than we can eat!"

That is the state of the affair in Maidan. He closes off, this Professor Wynnyckyj, by saying to pray for them: "God help us!" They are frightened of martial law being imposed.

In light of all of that, what we are calling for, and what we are calling for federally, is targeted sanctions. We need more action on this issue. We need the government to step up, to actually do something, and that something is to have targeted sanctions against those who are responsible.

So that's what we're calling for in the New Democratic Party, on behalf of Andrea Horwath, and I'm sharing my time with someone who is of Ukrainian descent, our member from Essex, Taras Natyshak. I will give the floor to him now.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you to all of my colleagues in the House for dedicating and agreeing to unanimous consent to address the crisis that is happening in the Ukraine. I certainly echo the sentiments expressed by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, and, of course, I stand here as a member of Ukrainian descent.

I want to thank all members of the Legislature for making this a priority, for sending a clear message to those in the Ukrainian community, in our province and

across the country that we stand with them to support the rule of law, to support democracy, to denounce violence and to support human rights.

I have family members who live in the Ukraine. They are a proud and passionate people, and they are frightened. They're frightened that the continued violence that we have seen in Independence Square in Kiev could escalate and continue, given the inaction by the ruling government to address the concerns of those peaceful protesters. It is incumbent upon us as a Legislature to stand with those who speak for peace and tolerance and to use every resource that we can, whether it be sanctions or otherwise, to de-escalate the situation.

1050

I am so proud to stand in a Legislature that supports human rights, that continues to promote our values and our system of democracy. It is a message and a tribute to what can be possible in a functioning Legislature, and I know that is at the core of what those protestors desire. They want to see a functioning Legislature, a functioning government that listens to their concerns in a peaceful way. Today is certainly a contribution to that effort, and I want to thank all of my colleagues for making this moment something that I hope will resonate to our Ukrainian communities across the province and certainly into the hearts of those protestors, who seek only a peaceful resolution to this volatile crisis.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the PC speaker, in her speech—I think very appropriately—asked if the flag could be lowered to half-mast for the remainder of the day to signify the statements that have gone on here about the Ukraine. I'd like to put that formally as a motion before the House, to ask for unanimous consent to follow up on her suggestion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent to fly the Canadian flag at half-mast for the rest of the day as a symbol to the people of Ukraine of our thoughts and prayers. Do we agree? Agreed.

I thank all members for their co-operation. Just so that everyone knows, for clarity purposes, the Canadian flag has its own flagpole, and other flags are flown on another flagpole. For members, in case they receive any concerns about the Canadian flag not being flown, it is always flown, and under these circumstances, unanimous consent will allow for the lowering at half-mast and nothing else—clarity purposes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I might start by saying how wonderful it was to hear everybody speak and to see such unanimity on such an important cause.

This morning, my question is for the Premier. Premier, we held round tables in almost 30 cities this year so far. We've heard from small business owners, social organizations and families. A common theme occurred: high taxes, skyrocketing hydro rates and crippling red tape. People everywhere told us, "We need jobs," "We need opportunities," and "We want to work here in Ontario." Not one family or small business said, "Gee, I'm really hoping the Liberals and NDP raise my taxes again."

So yesterday, we filed an opposition day motion calling on this House to commit not to raise taxes—gas taxes, business taxes or other taxes. Premier, will you support our motion and commit not to raise taxes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since I became Premier, I've actually been to all of the ridings across the province, save two, and I Skyped into those two. So I have touched every riding—107 ridings I have been in, and many of them more than once—and have talked with people in every corner of the province.

So here's what we support: We support investment in those communities. We support investment in infrastructure. We support investment in people and partnerships with people in those communities so that young people can get the training that they need so that they can have the skills to take part in the 21st-century economy. We support creating an environment where small business—and large business, quite frankly—can thrive, and investment can come to this province and create jobs.

We are climbing out of an economic downturn, there is absolutely no doubt about that; 440,000 net new jobs have been created since June 2009. But we know that there's more to be done, and cutting programs and slashing across government—which is actually what the member opposite is advocating—is not what we will agree to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll say to the Premier, I'll remind her again—I'll pass that on to the 40 nurses in North Bay that you fired.

Premier, it was clear during the hearings that your province-wide 10-cent-a-litre gas hike is reviled amongst Ontarians. Social planning councils, food banks, chambers of commerce, mayors, seniors all spoke loud and clear: No new taxes.

You won't fund transit out of existing revenues, which have nearly doubled in 10 years, but you'll fund a billion dollars to cancel gas plants. Why should anyone trust you with even one more cent of their hard-earned money?

Already, Ontario has the highest payroll taxes in Canada, the highest energy prices in North America, and with the proposed half-a-cent tax, we will have the highest business taxes of all of the large provinces in Canada. Will you commit today to not raising existing taxes or implementing new taxes in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there are a lot of irons in the fire that the member from Nipissing has got, but let me just talk about what we believe is necessary at this juncture.

Let's just check in on the accuracy of some of the commentary. If we talk about nurses, in 2003, there were

111,218 nurses employed and nursing in Ontario. That's the number. In 2013, there were 131,728 nurses employed and nursing in Ontario. That's more than 20,000 more nurses in 2013 than in 2003. That's the reality; those are the facts, and we'll continue in the supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I am looking for order. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I will share that with the 40 nurses that you did fire last year in the city of North Bay.

Premier, if you won't listen to me, listen to the rest of Ontarians. Here's the Retail Council of Canada, through our pre-budget hearings: "The government needs to find additional ways to reduce taxes."

"Do not raise taxes and do not implement new taxes"—the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Here's just a citizen: Art Smith showed up and said, "Ontario's manufacturing sector has suffered thousands of job losses in the recent past and clearly illustrates the results of lost competitiveness in a world of global trade."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce said, "Lowering corporate income taxes has a significant negative impact on investment."

Premier, if you won't listen to me, will you take their advice and support our motion to not raise taxes? Or will you and the NDP stick Ontarians with the bill for your out-of-control spending?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite talked about the negative impact of lowering taxes, so I think he needs to check what his actual message is.

Mr. Speaker, what we know is that it is extremely important at this point in our history in Ontario to make sure that the investments that are needed are investments that are made. Whether that is investment in roads and bridges—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is now going to come to come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —in Nipissing or whether it is transit in the GTA or whether it's bridges in Kenora, we need to make sure that those investments are in place.

We know from the track record of the party opposite that making infrastructure investments is not what they do. It is not what they believe in. But we know from all of those businesses that we've talked to across the province that investing in hospitals like the one in North Bay, and investing in highways like Highway 69 is the work that needs to be done, and we are going to continue to make those investments.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is, again, to the Premier. She likes to talk about a track record. Let's talk

about her track record over the past year. Her office has been subject to two OPP investigations.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. That's enough.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Her office has been subject to two OPP investigations.

Hon. Jeff Leal: So has the PMO.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is now warned.

1100

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A search warrant was issued last night by the OPP. They have posted record job losses in the province. People in Ontario can't pay their hydro bills. All she's done is set a paralysis in her own government by appointing 37 panels, yet she ignores the Drummond report that her government spent a lot of money on. On the only occasion that this government has been tested since she's been Premier, she lost five out of seven by-elections.

It's very simple: The only person who has confidence in this government is Andrea Horwath. So I ask the Premier: Will she put our confidence motion to the test? Will she face the music and will she face the people?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure that the member opposite really wants to have a full discussion about by-elections, given their record, but the reality is that we have been working very hard over the last year. The plan that we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This goes both ways. I personally am getting a little tired of the shouting each other down.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The plan that we are putting before the people of Ontario, and that we are implementing, is one that is based on investing in the success of the people in this province. We're investing in infrastructure, which creates good jobs now and is an investment in the future. We're investing in skills and training for young people and for people who have been in the workforce and need to get back into the workforce. We've got a youth jobs strategy. More than 7,000 young people have placements. We are building on our knowledge economy, working in partnership with businesses. We will continue to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The only investment that the people of Ontario see this government making is the investment to cling to power, and it ain't pretty, Speaker. This Premier's predecessor held on to power by saving—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —seats in the GTA in the last election because of the cancelled power plants. The OPP is investigating. A search warrant was issued last night.

At this rate, our province cannot afford for this government to cling to power simply because the Premier wants to keep her picture on the second floor here in this assembly. If the by-elections are any signal, she has lost the confidence of the province. If the search warrant is any indication, this government is corrupt.

It is time that this government put a vote on a confidence measure in this House. Jim Wilson tabled it. Will the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Understanding the question, I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's make sure that's done properly, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of the committee work that has been done and the issue of the relocation of the gas plants, questions which I have answered many, many, many times here and in front of committee—I've been in front of committee twice—I just want to say we have provided all the information that the committee has asked for. We will continue to do that.

In terms of the issues that the member has raised that are being looked at right now, I just want the member opposite to know that we have worked completely and closely with the privacy commissioner. Dr. Cavoukian has noted that we've been fully co-operative. She said in August, she, meaning me, "has been fully co-operative with me and my office. In fairness to Premier Wynne, she said, 'You have my full co-operation, whatever you want from us.'" That's what I said to the privacy commissioner. That's what we have done. We have changed the rules and made clear what the rules are in terms of retention of documents. We've done everything in our power to move on from that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The problem with that is no one believes this government anymore. Even Liberal organizer Tom Allison is jumping ship to go support our former leader John Tory to become mayor of Toronto. The only people with confidence in this Liberal government are the New Democrats. They're the ones who want to move on from the OPP investigation and the gas plant probe to continue to prop them up.

So I ask again: Given the serious nature of the OPP search warrant, the massive job losses we have seen in this province, the high hydro rates that people cannot afford in this province and the scandals at OPG and at

Hydro One, will the Premier do the right thing? Will she call this confidence motion for a vote? Will she debate it so the people of this province can have their say in an election, so they can vote for a Premier that they elect, and so that somebody, whoever is the Premier, will actually have a mandate to do what they want to do with this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that we are operating in a minority Parliament, and I have been clear from the time I came into this job that I believed that it was the responsibility of all of us in this Parliament to make the Parliament work. We were sent here by the people of Ontario to a minority government, and we are working to make this minority Parliament work, and I will continue to do that.

The member opposite knows full well that a budget is being developed. As we discussed previously, the budget is a confidence motion. We will do our utmost to bring a budget to the House and to get that budget passed, but if that does not happen, then we know that we're into a general election.

On the issue of the relocation of the gas plants, I just want to be clear: We have provided 311,000 pages of documents to the committee, 30,000 from the Premier's office. The committee has heard from 77 witnesses and had 117 hours of discussion. We will continue to provide the information that the committee asks for.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The OPP anti-rackets squad is investigating the Liberal government over the gas plants scandal and an attempted cover-up. Yesterday they executed a search warrant in order to seize evidence of possible criminal activity. Can the Premier tell Ontarians whether the OPP anti-rackets squad received a search warrant for the Premier's office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Quite frankly, I'm a little surprised by that question. I think the honourable member is aware, as are all members of this Legislature, that we allow the police to do their work. If the honourable member has questions of the police, he can ask the police. We're not going to comment on it or delve into it. We will allow them to work independently.

The fact of the matter is, as the Premier just outlined, it was under her leadership that we reconstituted the committee; that the committee has heard from some 77 witnesses. They've received over 300,000 pages of documents. Mr. Speaker, we have worked very closely with the committee to respond to the requests that have come forward. Senior members of my ministry and I, as Minister of Government Services, have appeared in front of the committee to talk about the process that they

followed, and we continue to work with the committee to deal with this investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, a non-denial denial is not a promising start to this session.

Has the Premier or any member of her staff or cabinet spoken with the commissioner or OPP leadership about the investigation by the anti-rackets squad?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the member should take a very close look at what he's asking. We are talking about an issue that is with the police. I would think that all members of this Legislature would think it would be very prudent to allow the police to do their work and certainly not to comment on it or to interfere in any way. So quite frankly, I'm shocked that he brought that forward.

There are larger issues here before us and before the committee. The passage of time does not take away the fact that both the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party made the exact same commitment going into the last election. They were fully supportive of the move to cancel both those plants. Yet when we have tried to look at it from their perspective and we have tried to bring forward witnesses to talk about the undertakings they took, they have blocked it in every way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, I find the ongoing evasion of answers that are fairly straightforward to give quite troubling.

Will the Premier commit to placing anyone who is being investigated by the OPP anti-rackets squad on leave?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I've answered in an appropriate way. We leave things with the authorities. That's the way it works here in the province of Ontario.

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But again, I take a look at the record of this government and the record of this Premier in terms of striking the committee, in terms of asking the Auditor General to look into it. We have the Premier, who has appeared twice in front of the committee. I myself appeared in front of the committee. It was quite an experience due to the lack of, I would say, substance in what was raised by the opposition. We've seen over 300,000 pages of documents that have come forward, 30,000 of them from the Premier's office.

Again, when we've tried to look at this from the perspective of the opposition—who made the exact same promise, even had YouTube videos touting it—they blocked it at every turn, and they are the ones who have ended that line of questioning.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, it's not every day that the sitting government is the subject of a police investigation by the anti-rackets squad. It's important to proceed prudently.

Does the Premier agree that to ensure there is independence and transparency at every stage of this investigation—should charges be laid, will you ensure the appointment of a special prosecutor from outside Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the government House leader has said, and will say again, no doubt, I would just reinforce that we are not going to interfere in or comment on a police investigation. We're not going to do it. It's independent from government and I am not going to comment on things that I don't know about, and I will not interfere in any kind of police investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I ask you again, Premier: In order to ensure that the investigation and prosecution of this matter by authorities is seen as being independent and above reproach at every stage, will you commit now, should charges be laid, to appoint a special prosecutor from outside of the province if prosecution is needed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is a completely hypothetical question. I am not going to comment on what I would or would not do in a hypothetical situation. I am not going to interfere in an investigation. I am not going to comment on a police investigation. The police investigation has to be allowed to be independent and the police force allowed to carry on in an independent way. I am not going to comment on a hypothetical situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's nothing hypothetical about this. Documents were requested. We were told they didn't exist and then they existed. And now we find there is a special investigation by the anti-rackets squad, which is saying they found documents that supposedly didn't exist.

So I ask you again: In order to ensure the decision about the pursuit of this case is arrived at independently, will the Premier commit now to the appointment of a special prosecutor who will come from outside Ontario should prosecution be needed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: The fishing season is way off and I think that we've answered the honourable member's question.

But again, let's talk about what this Premier and what this government have done. Mr. Speaker, don't rely on me. Let's look at two officers of this Legislature.

The Auditor General, October 8, 2013, had this to say: "I did have the opportunity to meet with the Premier ... it was good to hear that they are taking the report seriously and they are taking some actions and changing the way things are going to be done in the future so that a situation like this doesn't evolve."

And the Information and Privacy Commissioner, July 26 of last year, had this to say: "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things. The government is dedicated to opening up access to government data."

As I say, I applaud the leadership of the Premier. She has taken this matter seriously and taken steps to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I didn't want to interrupt the flow of questioning from the NDP, but I do have two things to say.

First, I heard something in heckling that I couldn't assign to someone. The accusation that anyone here is a criminal is not parliamentary and I don't want to hear it again.

The second thing is, I think my spies have told me that the women have won the gold medal for curling.

Now, can't we all just get along?

Okay, back to work. New question. Point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm getting up for a question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. I saw someone moving here.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, you did?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I did.

The member from Newmarket—Aurora.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Frank Klees: Rogue agencies in this government continue to gorge themselves at the expense of taxpayers while their ministers and the Premier stand by and sing their praises.

I want to ask the Minister of Infrastructure about Metrolinx, his favourite spend-hungry and bloating agency. This is an agency where the number of employees on the sunshine list increased by more than 50% last year, where the more than 3,000 employees not only get free Metropasses but get a free guest pass in addition. If you're an executive, along with that free Metropass, you get 10 additional guest passes. What do transit users and taxpayers get in response from Metrolinx? They get fare increases and they get recommendations to increase an arsenal of taxes, including a new 10-cent-per-litre gas tax.

Speaker, what do the minister's speaking notes tell him to say in defence of this agency and why he as a minister has failed in his responsibility to hold them accountable?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is the Metrolinx that, for the first time in Canadian history, won the APTA award over all Mexican, American and other Canadian transit authorities as the best-run, best-managed, best public service transit authority in North America and is ranked the best. I am enormously proud of Mr. Prichard and—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: How much did that award cost?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey, the member from Leeds—Grenville and the member from Durham will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, you whispered it. I caught you.

Interjection: It was confidential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I caught you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Let me answer the member from Simcoe—Grey, Mr. Speaker. What did it cost? It cost thousands of hours of work, sweat, time and people who work overtime during floods, during difficulties, when rails get washed out, to ensure that it is safe and everyone gets home. Quite frankly, we have a staff that works overtime and tirelessly, and it costs their families the commitment of public service.

We're darn proud of Metrolinx. We're darn proud of our employees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Whether it's Ornge or eHealth, whether it's gas plants or Hydro One or green energy or whether it's the Pan Am Games or Metrolinx, there isn't a file under the watch of this government that isn't blotted with scandal and incompetence. Now we're told that Metrolinx isn't satisfied with its executive suites and is spending an estimated \$40 million on new opulent office suites at Union Station.

I'd like to know from the minister, can he tell us whether he or the Premier or the Minister of Finance will be pleased to cut the ribbon on these new opulent \$40-million-plus office suites? Or will it include the entire cabinet or the entire Liberal caucus, who will then celebrate this kind of incompetence, scandal and waste? Who will it be?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: On this side of the House, we are very proud of a record in government where we have the lowest per capita spending of any province—the best value for tax dollars in Canada.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham has just earned it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We're very proud of the billion-dollar renovation partnership we have with the city of Toronto and others and the restoration of the old historic Grand Trunk Railway offices, which are heritage properties, which we committed to do.

We are recovering from the party opposite, which filled in subways and froze GO Transit, underinvested in GO Transit. The member opposite was the Minister of Transportation who oversaw the growth of Toronto's congestion problems and the loss of billions of dollars and now slaps public services—and is now joined by the third party in thinking everyone's a taxpayer and no one's a citizen: people who know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

I am proud of our record and the public servants in Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier tell us whether any members of the Liberal government and members of the staff have been inter-

viewed by the OPP about the deletion of emails, and if so, who?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

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Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP House leader has Thomas Mulcair envy here, but my answer is going to be exactly the same: We do not comment on police investigations. We do not interfere in police investigations. When the authorities are involved in something, we keep our distance from it and keep an arm's length from it.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, about the good work of the Premier in terms of inviting the Auditor General to look into the Oakville situation, reconstituting the committee and appearing twice in front of the committee. I myself have appeared in front of the committee. The Minister of Energy has, I believe, several times.

Again, we have co-operated fully. Some 300,000-plus documents have been provided, and we're going to continue to work with the committee as they undertake their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, not an answer. Let's try this one: Is the Premier aware of any other search warrants that are being sought or have been granted in this investigation?

Hon. John Milloy: I've already answered the question that's been put forth, but let me take a moment again to go back to an earlier theme, to talk about the important work that we've done with officers of this Legislature. Again, I remind members that these officers report to the Legislature as a whole, so they are in fact as responsible to the opposition as they are to us, to outline their independence.

So, this is what Dr. Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner—again, I'll share some other quotes. On June 25 last year, she said, "This government, with respect to my investigation and the work that we have done with the government, has been very forthcoming," and, "Any co-operation we needed was there."

June 13: "I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne's government's approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff."

Again, June 25: "I'm pleased now to report that the new government has acted proactively to address the recommendations made in my report."

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. We recently made history in Ontario when we introduced the proposed Ontario Immigration Act. At its simplest, this proposed legislation is all about giving Ontario more say in ensuring that immigrants who are coming to Ontario have the skills that match the jobs we are creating in Ontario.

Could the minister, through the Speaker, tell this Legislature how important this proposed legislation is?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville. I had the opportunity to go to her riding a little while back. I met with newcomers in her riding, and I know she's doing an excellent job as a strong advocate for her community.

The recent changes to immigration by the federal government have not fared well with Ontario. Currently, economic-class immigrants make up under 50% of all new immigrants here in the province of Ontario. Back in 2001, they made up 64% of all newcomers here in our province. Despite this, Ontario remains the number one destination for immigrants here in this great country. In 2012, more immigrants chose Ontario than all provinces west of Ontario combined.

Our government is showing leadership. We're acting now to ensure that our province is set up for economic success. We need newcomers around the world to continue to bring their skills here to the province of Ontario, so we can continue to build a strong economy for future generations of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to thank the minister for that very excellent answer. The fact is that newcomers from all over the world have been choosing Ontario for generations. There's a reason they choose Ontario. Some have been here for as little as two weeks, and some have been here for as long as two centuries. Regardless of how long they have been here, they have come here for one reason: seeking a better life.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us how this bill, if passed, will reinforce the cultural and social importance of immigration to Ontario?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again I'd like to thank the member for the excellent question. I'd also like to thank my predecessor the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport; and the PA to MCI, who is now the Minister of Children and Youth Services, for committing to taking Ontario in a new direction through the immigration strategy.

Today our government is fulfilling a commitment, and I believe that the proposed Ontario Immigration Act is not only the right direction, but it's a new direction that will bring us to where we need to be here in the province of Ontario.

We want immigrants to come here and to continue to build deep roots in our province and build strong families and become great citizens. We want to make sure that Ontario remains the number-one destination for newcomers here in Canada. Our province has welcomed and relied upon immigrants from its earliest beginnings, and it continues to do so today.

While the economic benefit of immigration is important, so is the society we're building. Communities across Ontario are beacons of hope, trust and freedom with strong pillars in place to allow for opportunities for our great province to continue to build itself.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. Amid the secrecy, the destruction of public records and the politically motivated decisions to cancel power plants lies a simple truth: Your gas plant scandal has increased hydro rates, your gas plant scandal has driven business out of the province and your gas plant scandal has killed jobs.

The Premier's role, from signing the cabinet document to her decisions as campaign chair, has finally caught up with her, and the trail of breadcrumbs led the OPP right to the Premier's door.

Even after Privacy Commissioner Ann Cavoukian wrote of the "routine deletion of emails ... to avoid transparency and accountability," the Premier had to be prodded repeatedly just to own up and take responsibility for the crass political decisions and the fallout thereof.

If your government is so transparent, Premier, why did it take an OPP warrant to get some documents from your government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear that 311,000 pages of documents have been handed over to the committee, so to suggest that somehow I or my colleagues had to be prodded to pass over documents is just not accurate. It just does not reflect the reality.

We have answered every question that has been asked by committee. We opened up the process. We have given documents that have been asked for—all the documents that have been asked for—to the committee. We will continue to do so. We will continue to co-operate in every way possible. But I am not going to comment on a police investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, here's a message for the Premier: This is no longer a question about how many documents you released. It's a question about how many documents you've deleted.

Premier, if you're open and transparent, it shouldn't take a search warrant to get some answers that Ontarians deserve. The former Premier disgraced his office when staff were instructed to destroy information, all while the current Premier insists on standing in the line of fire, protecting Liberal interests at all costs.

The answers the government gave in the House have not been satisfactory; we've heard that today. The answers the government gave in committee have not been satisfactory. We're at the point where it takes a team of OPP officers with crowbars just to pry these secrets out of your scandal-plagued government.

If you are truly open and transparent, why not let the people of Ontario have a say in your government? Why not air your 10 years of scandal? Let the people of Ontario have a say. Call a want-of-confidence motion and let's get on with the doing the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: There is so much that is quite frankly appalling about that member's question, but let me just pick up on one thing he said at the beginning. He had the gall to stand up here and talk about a politically motivated decision? This from the party across the way that had YouTube videos, that sent out flyers, that sent out pamphlets, that had robocalls saying, "The only way to stop the gas plant is to vote Progressive Conservative. Vote for Tim Hudak."

This was a commitment that was made by the Progressive Conservative Party. They cannot hide behind it. Despite their efforts to block that from their memory, the people of Ontario know that every party in this House had the exact same position. It was a promise they made and a promise we kept.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Labour. When Gate Gourmet, a multinational corporation, bought out Cara Foods, a Canadian company, they laid off over 50 permanent employees, people with many years of experience, and replaced them with temporary workers hired through a temporary help agency.

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Across Ontario, many workers are facing precarious employment. More and more workers are hired on short-term contracts, with temporary jobs, no job security and no access to benefits, and the growth of temporary job agencies is playing a major role in this change.

Can the minister explain why this government is allowing multinational corporations to exploit Ontario workers and eliminate good-paying, permanent jobs?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for bringing that question forward. I stand here very proudly to say that we were the first government in all of Canada to bring in a specific piece of legislation, in 2009, regulating temporary help agencies in this province. We have shown leadership on this important issue, making sure that vulnerable workers are not taken advantage of, making sure that they are not subjected to having to pay recruitment fees, making sure that they are not paying fees to just write CVs or resumé, making sure that they get paid the wages they so deserve.

I want to thank the member from Brampton West, from our caucus, who worked very hard on this issue. In fact, he brought a private member's bill in 2006 and it was his leadership that resulted in the 2009—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Sorry to burst the minister's bubble, but vulnerable workers are being exploited in this province, and that legislation is not protecting those workers. The Liberal government's Bill 146, which would amend the Employment Standards Act, does not itself go far enough; in fact, this bill does nothing to protect permanent jobs, nor does it prevent the exploitation of salaries for temporary workers.

More and more companies are getting rid of permanent workers and using temporary help agencies to hire contract employees. These employees are ineligible for pensions, for benefits, for raises, for job security—all of this just to save a buck.

Will the minister commit to serious legislative changes that protect permanent, full-time jobs in Ontario, to make sure that Ontarians are protected from being exploited by multinational corporations and temporary help agencies determined to drive down wages in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm glad the member talked about Bill 146, because we're taking a very significant step through Bill 146 in protecting vulnerable workers by making sure that precarious workers have the protection. If workers work hard, they should get paid for their wages, and that's why extending joint and several liability to work agencies and where people work is extremely important.

I find it ironic that the member opposite talks about vulnerable workers, but he has been quiet when it comes to minimum wage. Where does he stand on making sure that we raise the minimum wage to \$11 an hour and we index it to the cost of living? His party and he, himself, have been very quiet. When it comes to protecting vulnerable workers, the people of Ontario want to know, where does the NDP stand on the issue of minimum wage, and do they support indexing it to the cost of living?

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Though people are relieved to know that Ontario's network of social services is there to help them when they need it, the large majority of people who receive social services benefits want to earn their own money and to live an independent life without needing social assistance.

But getting off social assistance can often be risky as well. People worry that if they do what they feel is the right thing and succeed in getting a job, whether full-time or part-time, they might find their benefits cut off or sharply curtailed before they are in a position to earn a full-time, sustainable wage. This is stressful for people who want to get back in the workforce but still need some time to transition to full-time or part-time employment while receiving social assistance.

Minister, what are the rules for social assistance recipients who may have a full-time or a part-time job?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for the question. The answer, of course, is that, yes, we do encourage those on Ontario Works to work. In fact, that's an incredibly important part of the program. It's essential that people be offered as seamless a way into work—and hopefully full-time work—as possible, and that's our government's commitment.

In our 2013 budget, we presented a number of ways to reduce barriers to employment. We're allowing social

assistance clients to earn, as members of this assembly will know, up to \$200 without touching the benefits that they receive, and this, of course, has had the impact, at least in 57,000 instances, of enabling them to get their foot in the employment door and get the experience they need to move forward to fuller employment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The minister has explained what the rules are for men and women who receive social assistance and are trying to get back to an independent life while they receive social assistance. What we often hear in our constituency offices when people come in trying to abide by the letter and the spirit of the rules are their stories of people who set out to game the system. It bothers them because they know how Ontario's social assistance fabric has helped them through a tough time, and they don't like to see taxpayers' funds being misused through social assistance fraud.

Minister, what should people do when they suspect social assistance fraud? Who should they call? Is there a toll-free number? And what has our government done in the last 10 years to prosecute those who think they can cheat the province and steal social assistance funds?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks again for the question. Fraud is not a good thing. Fraud is a criminal offence. Those who commit fraud ought to be reported. In the 2,900 cases of suspected fraud that have been reported to our ministry, we've referred them to the police, which is the proper thing to do. If anybody is aware of any social assistance fraud, it ought to be reported to the police, simply put.

You asked about a 1-800 number. I just happen to have one with me. I carry it everywhere in case somebody says they suspect fraud. It's 1-800-394-7867. I'll repeat that number: It's 1-800-394-7867. If there's sufficient evidence of fraud occurring, please do your duty as a citizen and report it.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, in politics, usually it's good to be popular, but I want to give you a tip: The municipal leaders who are lining up to meet with you at next week's ROMA/Good Roads conference aren't there to give you a pat on the back. They're there to put you on the hot seat, demanding answers to the chaos that's been created by your mismanagement of the OPP billing review process. Whether they stand to benefit or whether they have their costs skyrocket, you've left municipalities in the dark by refusing to tell them how and when you will fully implement the new costing formula.

So spare them the suspense by answering this: With all the OPP-policed municipalities feel the full impact of the new billing formula next year?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased that the member from Brockville gave me the opportunity to talk about the OPP police costs. What I'm told constantly is

that the current model lacks transparency. It's difficult to read and understand, and it does not bill municipalities fairly.

For example, some municipalities are paying \$9 per household and some are paying \$900. You know who put that very billing method in place? The party opposite. It's them. And it's not only our opinion but the Auditor General's. Yes, I'll repeat: The Auditor General is telling us also that it's not fair and it's not transparent and we need to do something about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Based on that answer, I don't want to be the minister next week at ROMA/Good Roads. You foolishly released the costing formula, but you remain silent on how it's going to be implemented. It's like giving directions with a start and a finish line and nothing else. The end result is that you spin around and around and around, which really is what this government has done for the last 11 years.

Minister, municipalities have done the math. Some are counting on major savings, while others are dreading the prospect of passing on huge cost increases to ratepayers. You're either refusing to say whether it's coming in all at once or being phased in because you don't know or because you've got another surprise up your sleeve with your cost-of-policing plan. So which is it, Minister? Are you going to come clean before ROMA or not?

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Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Do I love that question? You know, this process was not transparent. We had a team of municipal councillors and municipal administrators around the table to develop this model. And then the OPP went around the province. They invited all the municipalities to come to the table to explain to them what is the proposed model. It's not going to be the model; it's the proposed model. Two hundred and twenty-nine municipalities showed up; 70% showed up. We are currently reviewing the feedback from the consultation and we are working with the municipalities to look into—if we need to adjust the model, we will. We are open, but we're not like your government, who did download to municipalities when you were in power. So we're doing the best.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

New question. The member from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. All right.

New question. The member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Good morning, Minister. As I brought to your attention in this House last year, one of the companies under government contract to build the Herb Gray Parkway in Windsor has stopped paying its local suppliers. This European company has left small Ontario business owners on the hook

for hundreds of thousands of dollars. What steps has the government taken to insist that our local suppliers are paid, that they're paid in full and that they will be paid in a timely fashion?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I sadly cannot comment on the specifics of this, given that there is a lawsuit under way, Mr. Speaker, right now. This is a commercial conflict between companies, first off. What can we do? The member for Vaughan has a bill before this House called Bill 69, which is prompt payment legislation. What we could do about this is, our party and your party could actually work together on something progressive for a change, which would be refreshing, and we could actually get Bill 69 passed so we could avoid these problems in the future, because I think this is an unfair situation and we need legislative authority to do it. I am continuing to use my authority as minister to ensure people comply with the law, but we need legislation to get prompt payment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What's done is done in the past. The legislation will help people in the future; it's not doing anything for these people now. This is a government contract, Minister. We're talking about small Ontario business people, people that have employees. They have banks calling them. They can't afford to keep going on month after month without money coming in. The girder problem on the Herb Gray Parkway demonstrated the lack of government oversight. Will the minister take responsibility today and ensure that these local suppliers will be paid in a timely fashion?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think I answered that question, Mr. Speaker. It's amazing to me, the anti-transit, anti-transportation, anti-infrastructure response from the third party. This is a \$1.4-billion parkway: no support from the opposition parties and historically no action. Windsor suffered under that party and under the party opposite, because it didn't get that transportation infrastructure.

We are so confident and so driven to ensure the building of the Windsor economy, we built this, and we now have finally won the battle with the United States to get the presidential bridge built, which will be about a \$2-billion investment.

We are now spending 2% of GDP on infrastructure. When that party was in power, it was a quarter of 1% of GDP, and they didn't build anything. We don't need to go back to those days—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Speaker, 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. This war was a monumental human catastrophe in which Canada, as a dominion of the British Empire, contributed 628,000 soldiers, sailors and aircrew, as well as supplies

and material. At the war's end, November 11, 1918, Mr. Speaker, 66,573 Canadians had been killed and another 138,166 were wounded.

As tragic as it was, the First World War played a major part in Canada's development as an independent nation.

I understand that the Archives of Ontario is presenting three exhibits—online, travelling and on-site—that tell stories of love, duty, heroism and sacrifice during that devastating and yet inspirational time. Could you give me and my constituents more information on this online exhibit?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. I encourage all members and all Ontarians to visit the Archives of Ontario website to see the excellent exhibit that the member referenced, commemorating 100 years since the start of World War I. It's called Dear Sadie. It's an Archives of Ontario online exhibit that was launched Friday, February 14, and it features fascinating letters between soldier Harry Mason and Sadie Arbuckle of Toronto during the war. The letters, accompanied by photos, posters and maps, give a look at the chaos on the battlefield and the concern on the home front.

Harry, who lived briefly in the Toronto area as a teen before moving to Alberta, eagerly enlisted in the Canadian army shortly after the war broke out. Harry served as a front-line soldier in the Flanders trenches before he volunteered to fly with the Royal Flying Corps as an observer and gunner. Harry's letters to Sadie show how over the course of the war his enthusiasm about it changed to bewilderment. Harry was unfortunately killed in action on April 28, 1917, six days after he wrote his last letter to Sadie.

In addition to the online exhibition, cultural and heritage organizations across the province will be able to host the travelling exhibit starting in the summer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the minister again, I have read about this online exhibit. It sounds fascinating. I know the Archives of Ontario has been the premier source of information about the history of the province and its people since 1903.

I also have a classmate from Cumberland whose father fought in the war in the Vimy Ridge campaign. She has written a book on this. I'm interested in going to the archives and seeing if her book is there about her father. He became the clerk of the township of Cumberland for 20 years.

The records held by the archives are true and lasting testaments of the activities, beliefs and principles of those who came before us. It helps provide transparency of government and accountability to its citizens.

Minister, can you provide the constituents of Ottawa—Orléans, and all Ontarians, some information about the services provided by the archives and what they can expect when visiting this excellent Ontario service online or in person?

Hon. John Milloy: I encourage everyone to take advantage of the services at the archives, which, of course,

physically is at York University Keele campus but has a very robust website that they can access as well.

In terms of the physical location, it houses both public and private records. I'll give you some facts: 105,000 metres of textual records; 4.4 million photographs; 350,000 architectural drawings and maps; more than 2,600 artworks; over 30,000 hours of audio, video and film records; and 1,500 gigabytes of electronic records.

In terms of online initiatives such as the Dear Sadie exhibit, the Archives of Ontario has taken many steps to link citizens with its services through its website, including online access to electronic records, a database to archives, library and art collections, digitized collections, 39 online exhibits, and online educational lessons which are geared to Ontario's curriculum.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, detectives from the OPP's anti-rackets unit executed a search warrant at the facility where the gas plant emails were archived. The privacy commissioner has already determined that you broke your own law when your party systematically deleted those records.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Come out with your hands up.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Auditor General has also confirmed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I made reference to this earlier, and I will be very forceful and not impressed if it continues.

Finish your question, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Auditor General has also confirmed that your actions will cost the Ontario taxpayer \$1.1 billion. The costs will have to be paid through even higher hydro rates than we're paying already, for decades to come. It's just another way that you've damaged our economic competitiveness, and 600,000 unemployed Ontarians are paying the price for your incompetence.

Premier, it is time to come clean. Enough of the obstruction. Will you finally take responsibility, call our confidence motion and let the people decide?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have so clearly taken responsibility and answered every question and opened up this process, Mr. Speaker, over and over and over again, in this House and at committee. I have said today I am not going to comment on an investigation that's ongoing. The police investigation has to be independent. I am not going to comment.

What I am going to do is I'm going to read what the privacy commissioner has said over the past months about what we have done.

She said on August 21, 2013: "She has been fully co-operative with me and my office. In fairness to Premier Wynne, she said, 'You have my full co-operation, whatever you want from us.'" That was August 21, 2013.

July 26, 2013: "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things ... the government is dedicated to opening up access to government data." That's July 26, 2013.

June 25, 2013: "This government, with respect to my investigation and the work that we have done with the government, has been very forthcoming...."

June 25, 2013: "... [A]ny co-operation we needed was there."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, the justice committee has spent a lot of time investigating your gas plant scandal. We've seen redacted documents, systematic email destruction, and unco-operative and obstructionist Liberal witnesses following one after another after another.

What has become clear is that at all levels of your Liberal Party, there's a belief that no one should be held accountable for this outrageous waste of taxpayers' money. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that the NDP have no interest in holding the guilty parties responsible either.

Well, the OPP doesn't need their co-operation and they don't need yours. They have search warrants and the threat of criminal prosecution to finally get to the truth.

Why don't you come clean about what you know and finally allow for the guilty parties to be held accountable for their actions? Call the confidence motion today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are two more quotes that I want to read, but I want to just be clear with the people of Ontario that I have answered every question. I have said exactly what I know. I've said it in this House, and I have said it in the committee.

I want to read two more quotes from the privacy commissioner. She said on June 13, 2013, "I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne's government's approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff."

On June 25, 2013: "I'm pleased now to report that the new government has acted proactively to address the recommendations made in my report."

Mr. Speaker, we have acted with integrity. We have opened up the process. We have provided all the information that has been asked for by the committee. We will continue to co-operate, and I will not comment on other investigations.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Acquired brain injury is the leading cause of disability for children in Ontario.

On January 3, 2014, the acquired brain injury clinic at McMaster Children's Hospital saw its last patient. This clinic is the only publicly funded interdisciplinary acquired brain injury centre serving children in central southwestern Ontario. This clinic has been in operation for 18 years and is known for its excellence in care.

Can the minister explain why they've closed their doors?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I certainly will look into this particular situation. I would appreciate any details you might have. I will happily look into this.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that the member opposite is absolutely right: People with acquired brain injuries need significant help from our health care system, and we are here to serve those people. We've enhanced supports for housing for people with acquired brain injuries—supportive housing. When it comes to medical care, I will look into this particular situation, but I can say that, provincially, people with acquired brain injuries get excellent care in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: My office learned about this closure when mother Gloria White contacted my office. Her 17-year-old son had been in a bike accident and was referred to the clinic, where he received excellent care. Now that the clinic has closed, there is no specialized interdisciplinary and long-term care available to treat children who are recovering from a traumatic accident. It simply makes no sense to close this clinic.

Is the minister prepared to stand by as children lose access to essential care, or is she prepared to do something about it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said, I will look into the thinking behind this particular change of service, but I can tell you that funding to help Ontarians with acquired brain injury has increased from \$38 million in 2003 to \$68 million: an 80% increase. There is more that we need to do for people with acquired brain injuries.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all the members of this House to join me in welcoming two students from my riding: Gurpreet Kaur, who's in the gallery, as well as Mehma Kaur. They are here as part of the model Parliament. Please welcome them.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing on a point of order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to correct my record. When speaking positively about lowering taxes, the exact

quote from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce should have read, “Lowering corporate income tax has a significant impact on investment.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members can always correct their record, and that’s appropriate.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know that the introduction of guests took place before question period, but I wonder if I could introduce Terri-Lynn Brennan, who’s the program coordinator of heritage, community engagement and education for the city of Kingston, who’s here for museum day. They’re having their annual meeting with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

Just as a point of information, I spoke to the member from Simcoe North. Sylvia Jones is from his riding.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Jennifer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Jennifer Jones; sorry.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I also curl—just not as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not as well, but you also curl. That was just one more plug for the wonderful gold.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce Nicholas Waltenbury and Anthony Caliciuri, two young North Bayites who are here as mock parliamentarians.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I’d like to take an opportunity to welcome my mother- and father-in-law, Jim and Sue Keegan, who are present here today—actually not quite here yet but are in the building. They’re here to see their granddaughter and my daughter, page Abbey, today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That’s wonderful.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Mr. Todd Smith: I’d like to echo the sentiments of the member from Whitby–Oshawa, our deputy leader this morning, in her speech before question period.

Without our Ukrainian-Canadian community, the culture of this country would be sadly different.

As nearly every television in this building is tuned to Team Canada versus Team USA at this hour and to women’s hockey yesterday—they were tuned to Team Canada in their quest for gold at the Olympics in

Russia—you couldn’t help but be reminded of the 1987 Canada Cup team, two fixtures of which were Wayne Gretzky and Dale Hawerchuk, both Ukrainian Canadians.

Contributions of Ukrainian Canadians have added to the rich tapestry here in this country and this province in sports, arts, politics, academia and business. It means that we must stand with them now as they seek a new, free and brighter future for their own country. There must be an end to the violence. There must be a future for Ukraine that’s not dictated by edicts from Moscow. Most importantly, there must be peace on the streets.

Mr. Speaker, it’s my great honour to stand as the PC critic for citizenship and immigration and state that we believe in a free and independent future for the people of Ukraine.

These protesters, these residents of the Ukraine fighting for a free and democratic country, need to know that Canadians from coast to coast are standing with them.

Today, in a symbolic gesture, members of this Ontario Legislature voted unanimously to lower the Canadian flag as Ukraine marks a day of mourning. Today, we stand in mourning for those who lost their lives in this struggle for the future of Ukraine.

Last night, in spite of calls for an end to the violence and a so-called truce, we saw more bodies on the streets in Kiev. Their loss and what they died fighting for cannot be forgotten.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Over the winter break, I was privileged to meet with people living across the north-west to hear about the issues that matter to them. Overwhelmingly, two issues stood out: the dangerous state of our highways and the ever-escalating price of our hydro bills.

Before the Legislature rose in December, the Minister of Energy released this government’s latest long-term energy plan for the province, where it was revealed that the average family’s hydro bills will be raised by 42% over the next five years.

As if that wasn’t bad enough, the minister’s unsympathetic response that high hydro bills are “just a fact of life” is driving people to the edge, as are his claims that economic factors, such as inflation, are to blame. Certainly a 33% increase in our hydro bills over the next three years proves that it isn’t just inflation alone.

Finally, his claim that this government is “taking very significant steps to allow people to better control their consumption and other factors that have impact on their rates” just isn’t cutting it either, because it was recently revealed that, since 2007, this government has increased off-peak rates by 140% while increasing peak rates by 48%, thereby drastically diminishing the gap and therefore consumers’ ability to achieve savings.

This government has made it so that it is literally impossible to receive an affordable bill for this essential service. The reality is, the reason for our skyrocketing hydro rates falls squarely at the feet of this Liberal government and their mismanagement of this file.

I'm calling on the Minister of Energy to show some respect for the hard-working people of this province by reining in these out-of-control rates and making hydro bills affordable.

LOCAL FOOD FUND

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today and let the House know that recently our Premier visited FoodShare to announce the launch of the new Local Food Fund. That's Ontario's \$30-million investment that creates jobs and supports innovative local food projects. It's going to take place over the next three years. It's part of a much broader local food strategy to increase awareness and demand for foods that are grown and made right here in Ontario.

Chef Scott Bailey of the Compass Restaurant in Oakville cultivates his own vegetables, spices and herbs right at the waterfront location. He spends his mornings at the Toronto food terminal. He sources quality ingredients that are as fresh and as local as he can possibly buy. Scott's philosophy involves trying to shorten the gap between consumers and producers, and he has introduced this practice at the upscale Oakville restaurant where he is head chef. He was recently voted one of the Top 30 Under 30, which is a very prestigious hospitality achievement award.

Chef Scott is a very passionate believer in local and sustainable food practices. You can sample his cuisine any day of the week at the Compass Restaurant, located right in my neighbourhood in Bronte Harbour.

Supporting local food is part of the Ontario government's plan to grow the economy, create jobs and help people with their everyday lives. I'd like to thank the Compass Restaurant for what they are doing to make sure we do eat food that is grown right here in Ontario.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Rod Jackson: I would like to take a quick moment to acknowledge my mother- and father-in-law, Sue and Jim Keegan, again. They're here to visit.

I also want to talk about Bill 88. This government has continually called itself, along with the Premier, a social justice government. And yet Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in the developed world that does not offer the full extent of its child welfare services to youth who enter the welfare system for the first time at 16 and 17 years old. Instead, these youth are processed like adults and are often directed to homeless shelters and Ontario Works.

This policy is a direct violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It leaves vulnerable youth behind at a time when they need our help the most.

It's time we did better. This is why I introduced Bill 88, known as the "youth right to care" bill. This bill will ensure that all Ontario youth in need can voluntarily

access age-appropriate services and will give the youth the best chance for success later in life.

All that's left to correct this injustice is for the Premier and her party to call it for third reading. I urge my friends across the way to do what they say they do best: Be the government and the Premier of social justice. Please call it to third reading. Please make all the corrections we need to do to make sure that 16- and 17-year-olds don't fall through the cracks but have an opportunity to succeed like everyone in this room.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I, too, welcome your parents. Glad you're here. Behave.

FAMILY DAY

JOUR DE LA FAMILLE

Mr. Phil McNeely: This past Monday, February 17, was Family Day, celebrated by families throughout the province of Ontario. First celebrated in 2008, Family Day is becoming a very important day. It gives families across Ontario a chance to take a break from their busy schedules and spend some quality time together.

I would like to highlight two events that took place in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans on Monday for Family Day. My constituency staff and I hosted a Family Day pancake breakfast at Community Pentecostal Church on St. Joseph Boulevard. We were joined by the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, as well as 150 community members. This event also featured a magician, Ian Quick, who performed magic tricks for families. I would like to extend my congratulations to Brianna Lapointe, who won the magic kit draw. The kids really enjoyed the day.

L'association communautaire de Portobello sud a aussi organisé des activités pour la journée de la famille et j'étais fier d'y participer. Les activités ont inclus des promenades en traineau tiré par des chevaux, des jeux hivernaux et du chocolat chaud. Plusieurs ont profité du beau temps pour patiner, jouer au hockey et faire de la raquette.

Les deux événements dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa—Orléans démontrent l'importance de la journée de la famille pour les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Je tiens à remercier tous ceux qui ont fait de cette journée un succès, et j'anticipe que la journée de la famille va continuer à être une journée importante pour les résidents d'Ottawa—Orléans et pour toute la province.

GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm privileged today to be able to rise in this House as the voice of the people who live in Wellington—Halton Hills, and I want to update the House about the progress being made at one of Ontario's leading success stories in health care, that being the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in the township of Centre Wellington.

Throughout my tenure here as an MPP, through more than 23 years and two complete redistributions of the

provincial ridings in Ontario, I've always been honoured to represent the communities of Centre Wellington. Fifty years ago, I was born at Groves, and our three sons were born there, too, in the 1990s. My family is grateful for the outstanding care we have received at Groves, but we are not alone in this sentiment. I always advocated for Groves, and our entire community is very grateful for Groves.

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Recently, we were pleased to learn that Groves Memorial Community Hospital has officially received approval from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to complete stage 2 of the capital planning process for a new Groves hospital. This allows us to continue to move forward with planning for the new hospital that we need.

Just a few days ago, we received more good news. The ministry has promised Groves up to \$84,200 in one-time funding for the 2012-13 funding year to support the hospital on-call coverage program levels I, II and III.

I want to congratulate everyone involved with Groves—staff, volunteers, board members, foundation representatives, our local elected councils—everyone who plays a part in carrying on the mission that Dr. Abraham Groves left us to embrace: to be a leader in the provision of excellent, compassionate rural health care.

BLAGOJA RISTIC

Ms. Dipika Damerla: He taught me how to speak a few words in Serbian, words like “dobar dan.” I can still picture him patiently coaching me to say it just so. The “he,” Speaker, is Blagoja Ristic, producer of Serbian Television Toronto as well as Serbian Mosaic, who passed away suddenly on February 9.

Blagoja, affectionately called “Bob,” was born in 1950 in Skopje, the Republic of Macedonia. Bob immigrated to Canada with his wife in 1990 and then began to build his life anew, learning to speak English and French and graduating from George Brown College, in Toronto, in graphic design.

But his true passion was photography. Every time I saw him, it was with a camera in his hand, filming something for his beloved Serbian TV show on Omni TV and Rogers. In fact, I'm not sure if I ever saw Bob without a camera.

Bob leaves behind two children, Victor and Mia, both students, who helped their father in the studio to produce the shows. Bob was always trying to better his community. One of his pet projects was to create a cultural centre for the Serbian community, and he came to me for support.

At a personal level, I was always grateful for the wonderful way in which he helped me get to know the Serbian community. He did not have to. I reached out to him, and he generously took me under his wing and never asked for anything in return. I began by saying Bob taught me how to say “dobar dan,” but he actually taught me something much more: the simple gift of being generous.

Thank you, Bob. You will be missed.

MODEL PARLIAMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased that the young students are here today for the statement on the model Parliament that they're experiencing over a three-day period. On behalf of the opposition leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus, I want to welcome the students to the 2014 model Parliament.

I'm pleased that Megan Storey, a former co-op student at my constituency office, is among 107 young Ontarians who are trying out their career as MPPs and cabinet ministers. That was yesterday, today and tomorrow.

These students are from grade 9 to 12 and are chosen for their leadership, maturity, involvement in community, school activities and interest in government. They demonstrate strong interpersonal skills and get along with their peers and adults.

They will learn about the history of the Legislature and the democratic process through tours, workshops and presentations. Tomorrow, with their families and friends watching from the gallery, they will be taking their seats in this very chamber for a simulated session of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Yesterday, along with other MPPs, I had the opportunity to work in small group discussions with the students in a process called speed dating.

I'm not sure this House can call itself a model Parliament. The Speaker has warned us of that occasionally today, myself included. But I am confident that we can learn a lot from this new generation of future leaders of Ontario. I'm equally confident that they will learn from us and from the entire team at the Ontario Legislature.

Welcome to Queen's Park; welcome to our home. It's all our home. Best wishes for all of your futures.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I—another statement? It can't be done. Was it a statement?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You've made one. You were assigned another one to your party. You did not take it, regretfully.

I want to thank all members for their statements.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the Select Committee on Developmental Services shall present its interim report no later than March 6, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree to the motion? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Halton on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Mr. Speaker, I move that, following passage of second reading of An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in Ontario in the House this afternoon, private member's bill Bill 142 be immediately referred for third reading and speedy passage into law so that the people of Halton region may soon begin formal preparations to celebrate the 200th anniversary of their founding father, Major William Halton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we do that, we have one step that we have to do, and that is to seek unanimous consent to put the motion forward. That's the process.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I kind of skipped that one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes. Could we seek unanimous consent, please?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I seek unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Hon. David Oraziotti: In March 2012, the Ontario Legislature passed a motion calling on the Standing Committee on General Government to review the Aggregate Resources Act. It asked the standing committee to report to the House its observations and recommendations on how to strengthen the act.

As you may recall, the standing committee tabled its report in the Legislature this past October. The committee made 38 recommendations regarding various aspects of aggregate resource management in Ontario. Over the past few months, our ministry has reviewed the report and these recommendations. We have done this in collaboration with our colleagues in the Ministries of Transportation, Agriculture and Food, Rural Affairs, Environment, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Northern Development and Mines, Infrastructure, Finance, Aboriginal Affairs, Tourism, Culture and Sport, and Economic Development and Trade.

Today I am pleased to inform you that we have released the Ontario government's comprehensive response to the standing committee's report and recommendations.

Speaker, I'd like to start by acknowledging the excellent work of the committee, which included representatives from all three political parties. Extensive effort was made by the committee to create a comprehensive review of the current act, with recommendations on how our

government could strengthen and improve the act moving forward. It assures Ontarians that we, as a government, share the same commitment toward the wise management of these essential aggregate resources.

I would also like to recognize the significant contributions made by municipalities, environmental organizations, industry groups, aboriginal communities and the public, through their participation in the committee's hearings and by providing written submissions to help the committee understand this very complex issue.

Our government is now proceeding with the development of policy and regulatory changes that are consistent with the recommendations of the committee. Our priority continues to be finding a balanced and informed approach for the management of Ontario's pits and quarries. Over the coming months, our ministry will be conducting stakeholder and public consultations on the committee's recommendations. During our discussion, we will consider the following: the approval process and requirements for new pit and quarry applications and amendments to existing approvals; potential impacts to agricultural land and groundwater resources; ways to enhance the rehabilitation of pits and quarries; the creation of incentives and removal of barriers to encourage greater recycling of aggregate materials; and approaches to setting future aggregate fees that are fair and equitable and reflect the importance of aggregate resources to society.

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We'll begin by consulting with key stakeholder and aboriginal communities to support the development of solutions. This will be followed by proposed policy and regulatory changes, for which we will seek broader input from the general public and other interested parties. Through this process, we'll establish a clear understanding of future legislative and regulatory needs for aggregate resource management that will create greater predictability and certainty for Ontarians.

Aggregate resources such as sand, gravel and stone are essential to modern society and vital to Ontario's economy. Aggregates play a critical role in the maintenance and construction of our infrastructure. They're used to build our roads, subways, hospitals, schools and the houses in which we live. The aggregate industry is an important part of our economy. The industry supports thousands of direct and indirect jobs in Ontario. On top of that, the aggregate resource sector supports our province's construction industry. In 2012 alone, 152 million tonnes of aggregate were produced to support demand across the province.

Based on projections, Ontario is expected to grow by almost four million people by 2036. The infrastructure needed for this growth will require a steady, consistent and accessible supply of aggregate resources. Speaker, our government is very conscious of the need to properly manage Ontario's limited aggregate resources, while also protecting other important resources, such as our groundwater, our prime agricultural land and our natural and cultural heritage. Our government believes that this can

be achieved. We believe that we can find a way to provide predictability and consistency to the aggregate industry as well as ensure affordable aggregate is available to continue to help build our province.

We also believe this can be done while ensuring the protection of our environment and agricultural lands and that our water continues to be safe to drink. It is our collective responsibility, and I would encourage all interested Ontarians to participate in our consultation process that will take place later this year. These efforts will contribute to a sustainable industry that supports continued economic prosperity for our province, while protecting our environment and enhancing the quality of life for Ontario families now and in the future.

I want to just take a minute and also thank all of the members of the House that have participated in the many hearings and have been reaching out to various individuals and organizations across the province to bring to bear these important recommendations that have come forward, and we're pleased to respond to the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now it's time for responses.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my honour to respond to the minister's statement regarding the tabling of the ARA, as we came to know it affectionately: the Aggregate Resources Act.

In terms of a bit of history, because I think it's important to talk about how we got to this place, it was actually in 2011, just prior to the general election, that a commitment was made by all three parties to review the Aggregate Resources Act. Then, when the government was formed in September 2011, we had a few stops and starts on the Aggregate Resources Act review; one, of course, was the famous prorogation, where all business of the legislative chamber stopped. We re-formed again after that; again did some further study, did some site tours and again had to take a four-month break because we were not allowed to complete our report. Ultimately, we did get it finished last fall. So from September 2011 until now, we finally have a report and a response which I think all members should be pleased with.

In particular, I want to thank Jerry Richmond. He is the researcher that did a lot of the yeoman's work on preparation and background. I can assure you, committee members had a lot of questions, and he did an excellent job trying to educate all of us, because we all come to this with a different level of knowledge.

In particular, my colleagues Michael Harris from Kitchener-Conestoga, Laurie Scott from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and myself sat on the committee through the entire process, but there were some members who were not so fortunate. Jerry's work allowed everyone to come up to the same level of knowledge and allowed us to come forward with a consensus report, and I think a consensus report was important.

This is an issue that impacts some ridings and some individual communities in a very direct and immediate way. And for others, it's where their product comes from to pave the roads and to build their buildings.

I was pleased that we were able to come forward with 38 substantive recommendations. I'm pleased to hear the minister is going to continue to do further study, because, quite frankly, some of our recommendations went beyond what would officially be considered our mandate to study the Aggregate Resources Act.

We all came to appreciate very quickly that the removal and processing and extraction of aggregates across Ontario does not simply fall under the purview of the Minister of Natural Resources. We were able to sneak in to encourage some further study that impacts and ensures the municipal affairs and housing minister touches on many of the other ministries that are impacted by this legislation, so I'm pleased to hear that. I hope it doesn't take us four years to get to the next round of negotiations and feedback, because it's important and we need to move forward. There are some things that need to be changed very quickly for us to improve the situation in Ontario and make sure that everybody understands the value of aggregates while also protecting our communities and our homes.

I just want to thank the members of the committee who did have the opportunity to participate, and I hope everybody gets an opportunity to review those 38 recommendations because there's a lot of value in them regardless of whether you have stone, sand and gravel in your community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my honour to stand in this place and speak on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, and respond to the Minister of Natural Resources on his report on the recommendations on the Aggregate Resources Act from the standing committee.

I would like to begin: Basically, aggregates are literally the cornerstone on which Ontario was built. That's "literally," because stone and gravel and sand—we make concrete; they're the base of our roads. Our society cannot continue without aggregates and I think that's where we should start.

What sparked this review, in our opinion, was the controversy about the Melancthon proposal in Melancthon township to create a big quarry. What that sparked was not a quarrel. It sparked a controversy: What is proper land use? It was basically a land use issue. In response to that, this committee was created to look at the Aggregate Resources Act.

The committee became kind of a legislative version of The Amazing Race because some of the people got to go on the—they did a really good job. Some people got to go on the tours, toured the pits. And then, the government stopped—prorogation—and then after prorogation, we had different teams and different people. The only real constant was the team from the legislative research branch. They really deserve some recognition for this. Jerry Richmond was like the guy at the end: "You've gone to here. You can't go much further the next day." That was his job. He really deserves some credit.

This was a consensus report. That's very important. All the parties agreed. I can say there were areas where

some of us wanted to go further, but we felt it was better to agree and give a report that the minister and the ministry and the government can act on. I think that was very important.

1330

The 38 recommendations, in our opinion, make a lot of sense. They focus on the approval process, so people on both sides, people who want approvals and people who are worried about how the approvals are given—so that can be solidified. At the end of the day, it's still about land use, about protecting agricultural land, protecting ground water, and we need aggregate.

This report—it was a good thing, and I'd like to thank the member from the PC Party. She focused on recycling aggregates. That's a very important part of this report. I'm happy she focused on that.

One thing: It was my interesting moment at this committee when we discovered that the majority of northern Ontario isn't covered by the Aggregate Resources Act. On that point, I'd like to say, because we do have the same conflicts in portions of the north that aren't covered—and it's our hope that all the people involved will follow the spirit of the act, because in places where there is not regulation but regulations exist in the province, and for some reasons—but we hope that they follow the spirit of the act.

I was happy to hear that the minister is going to get the ministry to move as quickly as possible on these recommendations. We will support that.

At the end, the report still doesn't touch—it went as far as it could, but there's still the overarching land use piece. It's bigger than just aggregate resources. We all talk about protecting agricultural land. We have to actually look at how we're doing that and if we're doing that, because we're using agricultural land for a lot of things other than agriculture, and it's also a finite resource. We're not in favour of saying, "You can't build anything on agricultural land," but we need to take a long, hard look at that issue, as long and as hard as we looked at the Aggregate Resources Act, because that one is still not solved.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I've missed this opportunity pretty well all week.

"Whereas the government is considering a 10-cents-per-litre increase in the price of gas to fund public transit" in Toronto; "and

"Whereas a 10-cents-per-litre increase in the gas tax places an unaffordable financial burden on many families, especially those on fixed incomes and those living in northern and rural communities" of Ontario and "who have no access to public transit"—unfair; "and

"Whereas the increase in gas tax would cost the average household over \$260 a year; and

"Whereas the government already taxes gas at 14.7 cents per litre, plus the HST taxes which currently cost approximately 15 cents per litre" for the HST alone;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the proposed new 10-cent-per-litre gasoline tax and to find better ways to fund public transit through alternatives such as the reduction of wasteful spending"—like we heard this morning—"and the introduction of an Ontario transportation trust."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to Emon, one of the pages here.

TOBACCO CONTROL CONTRÔLE DU TABAGISME

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is an absolute pleasure to be presenting this petition called "Flavour Gone." It comes from all over Ontario and was spearheaded by a group of young people from Ottawa. You just have to see their video; it is worth watching. Go on YouTube: "Flavour Gone."

"Whereas flavoured tobacco products are marketed to youth by the tobacco industry; and

"Whereas these flavoured and easy-to-use products serve to attract and addict youth at an early age; and

"Whereas the tobacco industry is constantly adapting and developing new products with the aim of attracting youths; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario is the only group that can stop the tobacco industry marketing to youth with addictive products in Ontario;

« Attendu que l'industrie du tabac vise les jeunes avec le tabac aromatisé; et

« Attendu que ces produits aromatisés et faciles à utiliser servent à attirer et créer la dépendance chez les jeunes à un âge précoce; et

« Attendu que l'industrie du tabac s'adapte et développe constamment des nouveaux produits pour attirer les jeunes; et

« Attendu que l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario est le seul groupe qui peut arrêter l'industrie du tabac de viser les jeunes avec des produits qui entraînent une dépendance;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Remove all flavours from all tobacco products and ban new tobacco products from entering Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Jaclyn to bring to the Clerk.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before" May 14, 2014.

I fully support this petition and give it to page Michael.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I have another petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This one here is rather relevant as well. It's for improved post-stroke physiotherapy.

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving any additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment"—that's not the way it was; "and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 or over to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" to pay for medically necessary treatment—shameful;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition" the Premier and "the Ontario Legislature

to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices."

I'm pleased to sign it on behalf of my constituents and present it to page Thomas and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

1340

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the north-west; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Owen to deliver to the table.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, sent to me by a group of individuals in Brampton, Oakville and Mississauga. I particularly want to thank and recognize Janet Tymoshuk, Maria Ortiz and Carl Williams. It's entitled "Safer Families Program in Peel Region" and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children's Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel community; and

"Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

"Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario's child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

"Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children's Aid Society and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children's Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program."

The Safer Families Program is an important priority within Peel region. I support this petition, and I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Jo Jo to carry it for me.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here with signatures from all across the province.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree, affix my signature and give it to page Jaclyn.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. John Fraser: A petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

I'm affixing my signature to the petition and giving it to page Anne.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition speaks to the misplaced priorities of this government and its Minister of Health. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug

Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition and hand it to Samer to deliver to the table.

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, but mainly the Toronto and Hamilton area. It reads as follows:

“Whereas we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Thirty thousand Canadians were infected with HIV and hepatitis C via tainted blood in Canada and it killed thousands of Canadians and destroyed families.

“We spent \$17 million on a publicly funded federal inquiry, namely the Krever inquiry, that revealed blood from a paid donor system was a key factor in Canadians receiving tainted blood.

“Billions were spent on top of the inquiry in compensation to those who received tainted blood and their families in part due to Canada’s reliance on blood from paid donors.

“The Krever inquiry recommended that blood be treated as a public resource and that Canada should not move to a paid blood donor system.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Your petitioners request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not issue or approve a licence to Canadian Plasma Resources. Further, we request the Legislative Assembly implement legislation that ensures no new paid blood donor clinics be allowed to open in Ontario. It is the responsibility of Canadian Blood Services to oversee blood collection and plasma collection in our country, and our blood plasma is not meant to be a commodity that is bought and sold.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Owen to bring it to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (HEALTHY DECISIONS MADE EASY), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ (DÉCISIONS SANTÉ SIMPLIFIÉES)

Mme Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to

improve the health of Ontarians / Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé et la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en vue d’améliorer la santé des Ontariens et des Ontariennes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

1350

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Speaker. It has been a long day in coming. I’m one of the last ones in the lineup. When you guys draw the names in that big hat next time, I hope I float to the top. But the best is yet to come.

I am so pleased today to be talking about Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. What Bill 149 is all about is pretty simple. It combines two bills that I’ve been working on since I was elected. I have been here for six and a half years. Those are ideas that I have been pushing forward since then.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can vouch for that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes.

For most of you, it will be a repeat. But for some of the people watching on TV, you may be hearing about it for the first time, but some of the ideas you will recognize.

The first part of the bill has to do with menu labelling, so that when you go into a big chain restaurant—when we say “big chain,” that means you have to have at least five outlets in Ontario; you have to sell at least \$5 million worth of food and drinks—you would be covered by the law. When you go into one of those—think McDonald’s: You would see “Big Mac, \$3.99, 450 calories.” From now on, in Ontario, in the big chains, information that is available—because all of those big chains have set menu items with set portions and set recipes that allow them to do this. They all have those cute little brochures that give you all of that information.

I know that every single one of us in here has been to Tim Hortons before—we’re politicians, after all; Tim Hortons is a must. But how many of us have known that there were Tim Hortons nutrition guides? I will read from the nutrition guide, Mr. Speaker. How many of us could tell that a Timbit can be as high as 90 calories? How many of us know that the muffins can be twice the calories of the doughnuts?

If you were to ask Tim Hortons for one of their little brochures, chances are, they would say, “Let me search for it.” Then a very good-hearted young person would start searching through underneath all of the cash registers, make a trip to the back, ask the oldest person in the place, “Have you guys seen one of those?” Then they ask you to come back. But you know I don’t give up, Mr. Speaker. I did go back, and I got my little brochure. Not an easy way to find out that information, was it?

Now you won’t have to do this anymore. You will come, you will see the different coffees, you will see the doughnuts, the sandwiches, the soups, and it will be there for you to see. The way we have it now with—I have Tim Hortons, but I could show you Subway or I could

show you Swiss Chalet; I have them all, if you're interested, for your next meal. The way we have it now, 4% of Ontarians take the time to go through the trouble that I've gone through. For the rest of them, they don't know. If you have it on the menu board, one out of two will use it to make their purchase. It makes a difference. They use that information to make informed choices for themselves and for their family. On average, it will decrease the calorie intake by 75 calories. While 75 calories may not look like a huge deal, if you apply this times the millions of times that Ontarians go, it makes a big difference. It makes a step in the right direction toward the obesity crisis.

The bill will also flag high sodium. If it has a lot of salt—you know sometimes when you go in the restaurant and you see a little pepper telling you that, "This is spicy"? Well, you will now have a flag, and the flag will be telling you if this has high sodium or not. I know that the Minister of Health will be introducing a bill very similar to mine on Monday, and I will talk further about this.

The second part of the bill has to do with flavoured tobacco. I was really happy when, in 2008—I had only been here for a year—my first private member's bill actually became law. It was a beautiful thing. It was with Dave Levac, who is now our Speaker. It was a joint effort, and we were able to ban flavoured cigarillos.

Everybody knows that the reason the tobacco industry has flavoured cigarillos is that they need the next generation of smokers. And how do you get a kid to smoke a cigarette? The first time you put this thing in your mouth, every cell in your body tells you, "Yuck. What am I doing? This tastes pretty bad." It makes you dizzy, it makes you feel like puking—not a good experience. You add flavour to this and all of a sudden your first drag is not that bad at all. It leads to a second and a third, and it doesn't take long for the nicotine to take over. The nicotine will be doing its work of making sure that it calls back to you 30 times a day for the rest of your life. It will make you a life smoker. This is what they're doing with flavour, so we were really glad that we were able to ban flavoured cigarillos.

The ink was not even dry on that bill that the tobacco industry had found a loophole. They continue selling to kids and they continue putting out more flavours like you can't believe. Why? Because it works. Why? Because kids are using them and they know that if they get kids to start smoking, they will become adults who continue to smoke. They will have their next generation of smokers. Nothing good comes of this, so it is time to stop those loopholes.

The bill also looks at new tobacco products. It looks at smokeless tobacco. Why? Well, because this industry is so creative. It is unbelievable the amount of marketing brainpower that goes into this industry to make sure that they keep this next generation of smokers, to make sure that they continue to be able to sell those products that everybody in Ontario, all 13.5 million of us, knows lead to cancer, lead to premature death, lead to a lot of dis-

eases that had better be avoided altogether. How do we do this? We make sure that we don't pick up the habit.

Those two bills have been debated in this House quite a bit. I haven't seen anybody telling me, "Oh, no, no. We would like to continue to make sure that kids are hooked on smoking," or that the obesity epidemic is something that we can ignore.

Will this bill change everything? Of course not. But this bill takes two tiny steps towards health promotion, towards making us healthier, towards keeping us healthy and towards preventing diseases in the long run. It's not going to change the world, but it's going to help us make it a little bit healthier.

I know full well that yesterday, actually, the bill from the Minister of Health, Bill 131, touching on the same issue—flavoured tobacco—was debated. I was not able to attend—I was in committee at the time—but I did read the Hansard from head to toe and I was really, really encouraged about what I heard. I heard the member from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, the member from Oakville, the member from Huron–Bruce, the member from Perth–Wellington, the Minister of the Environment, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—a very good rendition; this member is worth listening to, he's very funny—and then the minister responsible for seniors. They all talked in favour of, basically banning flavoured tobacco products.

So here we have a private member's bill that you have an opportunity to vote for on second reading this afternoon, today, on February 20, 2014. It can happen. The vote can take place. You have a bill that has been put forward by the Minister of Health that is a very good bill, that is also worth supporting. But in a minority situation, sometimes some of the bills really drag on. If you look at what has happened since we have been a minority government, there are more private members' bills that have made their way to the finish line than there are ministerial bills. Some of the bills that we all agreed on took hours, then days, then weeks, then months, then sessions to actually go to second reading. We have a chance to go to second reading.

1400

I have seen Bill 131 that the Minister of Health has brought forward regarding tobacco control; I have not seen the bill that she's tabling on Monday. We will all see it at the same time, but it has to do with menu labelling. It has to do with flagging sodium. I will read it at the same time as everybody else.

I think we're all on the same page. I think we all want that information to become public. If you choose to continue to eat food that is high in calories and sodium, more power to you. This is your life; you live it the way you want. But you will have the information to make informed choices. We're all going in the same direction. We have an opportunity today, through my private member's bill slot, to move it to second reading.

Once it is in committee, I guarantee you, I am open to suggestions, to listening to all. I know that I did not get it 100% right. I know that there will be changes. I'm 100%

open to this. Will it add to the bill? Will it subtract from the bill? I'm fully open. I'm ready to co-operate—co-operate with the minister, co-operate with the good people in the PC Party—just to make it through.

I think we all deserve to know what we're eating as more and more of us eat in restaurants, and I think we all deserve to do that little step to help protect our kids from being the next generation of smokers.

I hope I can count on everybody's support, and I guarantee you that once it reaches committee, I'm open to change.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous parler de mon projet de loi cet après-midi. Je sais que les deux projets de loi ont été débattus plusieurs fois et ont l'appui de tous les députés. J'espère pouvoir compter sur votre appui encore cet après-midi et pour le rendre en comité pour y amener des changements qui ont besoin d'être fait.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly very pleased to speak to Bill 149 today, which I will be supporting. It is An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and I believe it to be extremely well intentioned.

As a medical doctor and former medical officer of health, I have seen the damage caused by chronic illnesses. I have seen the burden placed on patients and families by diseases like lung cancer and diabetes. What frustrates me is the knowledge that much of the time these deadly diseases can be prevented. There are steps that all of us can take to ensure we stay healthy and help protect ourselves from these types of chronic disease.

We must also ensure our children are protected as well, because we know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults.

I believe that as legislators, we have a special part to play. The decisions we can make have a very real and positive impact on people's lives. We can help our kids say no to tobacco, we can help parents make the most nutritious choices for their kids, and we can protect Ontarians from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke. This bill certainly aims to help in this regard.

I am pleased to hear from the member from Nickel Belt that she has acknowledged some of our government's record in this regard, because we certainly have taken aggressive action to protect Ontarians, especially younger Ontarians, from tobacco smoke, and we have worked to prevent them from taking up smoking in the first place. We banned smoking indoors, in workplaces, and in enclosed public spaces. We banned the retail display of tobacco products on so-called power walls. We banned smoking in vehicles when children are present, and we prohibited the sale of flavoured cigarillos.

We have also worked to help kids eat nutritious foods as part of a healthy lifestyle. That's why we launched our Healthy Kids Panel, and we have implemented many of their recommendations.

There are certainly aspects of this bill, Bill 149, that I'm particularly interested in. Not only is the member

proposing that we post the number of calories in a serving; she has ensured that the serving is defined as that which is actually being served to people, because we know that portion size is exceptionally important in regulating the amount of caloric intake that an individual does consume.

She is providing for educational brochures, and she's also raising the question of sodium content, which is certainly very important in terms of public education, when high or very high amounts of sodium are present in foods. Of course, this is very crucial for those who have a tendency for or do have high blood pressure to be very aware of.

Our government has also enhanced breastfeeding supports in Ontario, so that every mum who wants to breastfeed in this province will be able to do so successfully. We have expanded our student nutrition program, providing 200 more breakfast programs to about 30,000 kids in high-priority schools.

But we recognize that there is more that can be done, so I am pleased to see that the legislation before us today shares our government's commitment to protecting our kids and encouraging Ontarians to make healthy choices. As the member for Nickel Belt has acknowledged, the government did propose yesterday that Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which, along with proposed regulatory amendment, goes in some respects even further than the bill we are currently debating. I was with the member from Nickel Belt in committee yesterday, so I was not present for the debate, but it's extremely heartening to hear the support from across all three parties for this important bill.

Our proposed legislation and regulatory amendments in Bill 131, if passed, would increase fines for those who sell tobacco to kids, making them the highest in Canada. It would prohibit smoking at playgrounds, sport fields and restaurant and bar patios, and, like Bill 149, it would ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products to make smoking less appealing to young people. It would strengthen enforcement powers to test for tobacco use in indoor public places, and prohibit the sale of tobacco on university and college campuses.

We've heard loud and clear from parents that they want the tools to assist them in making the best choices for their kids, so our government launched consultations on menu labelling last fall. It's something many Ontarians do feel very strongly about, and that's why I believe our government's approach is the right one. We're working together with health providers, the restaurant sector and, above all, parents. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care committed to introduce legislation this winter arising from our consultations, and I know that we all look forward to that proposed legislation being brought before this House.

We all share a common commitment to the health of our children. We all recognize that, as legislators, we are uniquely positioned to help kids and parents to make healthy choices. That's why I call on all members from all three parties to support Bill 131, the Youth Smoking

Prevention Act, as well as our government's forthcoming menu-labelling legislation, and I certainly will be supporting Bill 149.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. Improving the dietary health of Ontarians, as well as preventing youth smoking, are high priorities both for myself and the entire Ontario PC caucus.

We know that tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death, and that it is associated with several chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. We also know that nearly a third of children and youth in Ontario are overweight or obese, conditions that also contribute to chronic conditions later in life.

Preventing tobacco use and promoting healthy lifestyle choices are important for the health of our province, and disease prevention and wellness promotion are especially important in order to lower the impacts and costs to our health care system, so I share these priorities and the motivations behind the member from Nickel Belt's Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. However, for reasons which I will shortly discuss, I am unfortunately unable to support this bill, and I truly regret having to say that, because I have the greatest respect for the member from Nickel Belt and the important work she has accomplished during her time here.

As the member from Oak Ridges—Markham mentioned, there are currently two bills before this Legislature which are dealing with the prevention of youth smoking: Bill 131, which is the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, the government bill; and of course, Bill 149.

1410

Although I have some concerns with Bill 131, and I know we're not discussing that here this afternoon, I will be discussing those concerns during my leadoff speech in greater detail, probably next week. I do believe that it will achieve the stated goal of reducing youth smoking in the most comprehensive way. So I was a little bit surprised to hear the comments that were being made by the member from Oak Ridges—Markham with respect to supporting both bills, because they are different.

In my view, Bill 131 is the most comprehensive bill, and that's why I'm supporting it. Not that it in any way denigrates the merits of Bill 149, but I just believe overall it has the most balanced approach. Bill 131 covers all of the elements outlined in Bill 149 but is more specific and also has some additional legislative changes not outlined in Bill 149. Both bills prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products and both bills also increase the fines for those who sell flavoured tobacco products to youth. These two changes will go a long way in making smoking less attractive to youth, as well as limiting their access to tobacco products, and again I commend the member from Nickel Belt for drawing the assembly's attention to these two priorities.

Bill 131 covers some additional, important changes that are not outlined in the bill we are debating today.

Bill 131 prohibits the sale of promotional items with tobacco products, as well as prohibits tobacco sales on university and college campuses and other specified provincial government properties, such as hospitals. It also gives more scope to the inspector by expanding the types of places an inspector can enter, such as water pipe cafés, and increasing the fines that they can levy. All of these additional items make this bill a more thorough option in addressing and preventing youth smoking.

The bill that we are debating today also addresses the issue of menu labelling. As we all know, the Minister of Health promised last fall that she was going to be introducing legislation which would deal with menu labelling, and I understand that it may be coming forward next week. I look forward to seeing its contents, and I'm not intending to address in any specific way the menu labelling components of Bill 149 because, unfortunately, I'm not able to support it with respect to the issue of youth smoking. But I certainly await the tabling of the additional legislation by the government in due course. Even though we're not able to support Bill 149 in its present form, I certainly hope that the member will be able to achieve her objectives through the government bill, Bill 131, and perhaps the bill that comes forward on menu labelling in due course. I certainly will give that due care and attention. Again, I thank her very much for her efforts in these important objectives. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm pleased today to rise to comment on private member's Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague and seatmate from London West.

Let me begin by saying kudos to the NDP health and long-term care critic, France Gélinas, for taking the step yet again to bring forward a bill that will better help Ontarians make healthier decisions a whole lot easier. I'll split my comments into two, Speaker, just as the bill is structured, first commenting on the requirements of chain restaurants to provide calorie content and other nutritional information on menu items and secondly, a brief comment on the ban of the sale of all flavoured tobacco products by closing loopholes in existing legislation.

We all know that Ontarians can make healthy choices on their own, but there is no harm in having healthy eating information at one's fingertips when people would benefit from having intelligent information, especially when they're hungry and about to order a meal. That's why I support this bill, just like when we go to the grocery store, we have the ability, should we decide to do so, to look at the packaging and learn the nutritional value of some foods. Should we choose, it's pretty simple to look at the calorie count on the package. It can be a motivator to help us make wise decisions about what we consume.

Families, as we all know, are on the go—soccer, work, school; you name it. Understandably, many of us stop for a quick bite to eat. Fast food establishments are every-

where. They're convenient, they're quick and, for the most part, the food that's offered is relatively inexpensive compared to the high-end restaurants with the fancy linens and the crystal glassware.

I'm as guilty as anyone of stopping at Tim Hortons, Harvey's, Swiss Chalet, McDonald's or any of the other places where lineups aren't too long and the food will fill me up. Let's face it, Speaker: I have an expanding waistline as evidence of the food that I eat. I can speak about it; I'm not proud about it.

I know the statistics: 26% of Canadian children are overweight or obese, and three out of every four of our heavy kids will become obese adults just like me.

Kids, if you're watching at home, it's time to start making healthier food choices now.

Speaker, there's a lot of salt, or sodium, as we've already heard today, in our foods today, and that alone accounts for 16,000 premature deaths each and every year in this country. Obesity costs Ontario's health care system more than \$1.5 billion a year. Yet, though we know these things, most of us are probably as guilty as me of craving an ice cream cone or something else from time to time.

I would hope we all become aware of what we're doing here.

I know the member from Oak Ridges–Markham can appreciate this: My local health unit in Windsor–Essex county—the health unit, by the way, with the lowest provincial funding in all of Ontario, and that's something we hope one day to change—has been waiting for months now on a request for special funding to tackle the obesity problem in our area, which is more of a problem in our area than in most other parts of the province. Our health unit, under Dr. Gary Kirk, has a wonderful plan to turn an experimental program directed at our youth as much as anyone else—if it showed the results we're hoping for, it could be used as a template for other health units in Ontario.

So we, in Canada south, recognize that obesity is an issue, and we know the complexity of how certain food products play a major role in this public health problem.

If I can just turn my attention to the other part of this, Speaker, the part about the flavoured tobacco: It's more popular than ever, these days, with high school teenagers. It's a fad that seems to have caught on. Kids think they're cool when they use it. It's really alarming how popular it may be. It's kind of scary, actually.

I've seen the packaging for these products, as I'm sure many of us have. It's designed in such a way to appeal to young people. It's flashy and full of colours. They have flavours like watermelon, cherry, vanilla, strawberry and grape. The tobacco marketers are chasing the Mouseketeers in an obvious attempt to get them addicted to the drug, tobacco. Tobacco should not come in candy flavours.

We know there are serious adverse effects to this. We know the pressure it puts on our health care system and the cost of treating people who have been addicted to tobacco.

The last thing we want to do is develop a new generation of tobacco smokers, enthusiasts and addicts. Well, perhaps I should correct that statement. The last thing anyone but the tobacco companies wants to do is develop a new generation of smokers or tobacco enthusiasts or addicts.

Our children, our youth, are important to us. We need to take every step we can to protect them, and, at times, yes, protect them from themselves. I think they'll thank us for that later.

I certainly believe tobacco is bad for you. It's bad for me, if I'm standing near you when you're smoking.

Both the addition of calorie counts on menus and the ban on flavoured tobacco—Ontario should be taking the high road, demonstrating that we in this House take our health very seriously, and what easier way to start than with this bill, the Healthy Decisions Made Easy act?

Thank you to France Gélinas, the member from the riding of Nickel Belt, for being the long-term champion of this very important piece of legislation.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I only have a couple of minutes to speak on this bill, and I want to tell the House that I'm in support of the present bill—

Interjections.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, absolutely. As well, Bill 131, I believe, has been introduced as doing more or less the same thing.

But this takes me back a few years—last century, if I may say. Back in the olden days, at North York city council, we were debating for the first time prohibiting smoking in doughnut shops. At the time, I think the sky was falling, with the opposition to what we wanted to do. Doughnut shops today are still open, and they are thriving. People got used to it—better off, of course—and no one ever complained since.

This shows that we were on the right track at the time. I think we are on the right track today, supporting the legislation that is being proposed. I would urge the members of the House to go on with it and try and pass it as quickly as possible. I think we owe it to the families and to the young people. As legislators, I think we should do our part in trying to curtail young people taking up smoking.

Let's face it, Speaker: If someone wants to smoke, they're going to smoke. If somebody wants to stop smoking, they will find a way of stopping. I have to say that I stopped smoking some 40 years ago when my wife said, "You know, I really don't like the smell," and I said, "I don't like it either, so I'm going to stop it." That was cold turkey, and I did it. I know that it's not easy to do, but it's all up here, and if we want to do it, we can do it.

But as legislators, we have to do more. It's no longer a single personal matter; it's an issue that involves everybody, all our young kids. I think anything we can do to curtail that is necessary and it's important, especial-

ly in this day and age, when we are doing so much and talking so much and spending so much on health care. What else is better than to try and prevent our young people getting sick, getting addicted and then suffering the various consequences, which, in turn, we will have to suffer all the consequences of—not only the young people but family members and government as well? It costs everybody money.

I know we have a couple of minutes, but my colleague here wants to say a couple of things on this important bill. I have to say that I think it's so important that every member of the House should have an opportunity to say yes or no, willing or not. I do hope that, indeed, they will see the importance of addressing the issue in a very positive way.

I want to compliment the member for bringing it to the House today and all the others who will participate in speaking positively in supporting the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: That's wonderful, to the minister of seniors affairs, about quitting smoking. I know my husband can take some of that, and my son, very sadly, smokes as well, which is heartbreaking to me as a mother.

Nevertheless, I rise this afternoon to join the debate around Bill 149, the Health Statute Law Amendment Act. I should say at the outset that I am always very pleased to speak to legislation of the member from Nickel Belt. I have had the honour of serving alongside her as a member of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and can attest, as I think we all can, that she is a member who is very well-spoken and someone unafraid of staking out a position based on her principles. That is obvious in Bill 149.

Bill 149 is a bit of a hybrid bill, covering some of the territory we were discussing yesterday morning in the government's Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which aims to prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco, promotional tobacco items and allows for inspection of water pipe facilities, as well as higher penalties. The member from Nickel Belt previously tabled Bill 130, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, which similarly would prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products, the sale of flavoured tobacco and smokeless tobacco products. Bill 130 has been bundled into Bill 149.

Bill 149 also turns its attention to food services. If passed, it will require everyone who owns or operates a food service premise that is part of a chain of food service premises with a minimum of five Ontario locations and gross revenue of \$5 million to take certain measures. These include displaying the caloric content of quick-serve food and drink items; flagging high and very high sodium content of the same items; and offering nutritional brochures.

It should be clear to us all that there are enormous risks that go hand in hand with smoking. Those risks, of course, are not just limited to ourselves—but also those around us, whether as the result of second-hand smoke or

the behavioural example that we set when we choose to engage in certain behaviour.

School kids may smoke because their friends smoke. Children may take up smoking because a lot of their family smokes.

This is an area that has seen no end of studies over the last 50 to 60 years, Speaker, and we're still learning more every day. With each new study, we gain additional insight into how to mitigate risk and how to make more informed choices as free citizens. We understand now, in ways that our great-grandparents could not, the serious harm to health and the economy that is associated with smoking tobacco. We better understand the health implications, as well as the broader economic impacts, whether it's chronic or casual use, occasional indulgence or a grave addiction.

The same is true of our diets. There were certainly enlightened people 100 years ago who viewed their diet with scientific eyes. But outside of our major cities, even something as commonplace as vegetarianism is now would have been a fringe dietary choice even a generation ago. That has changed, as has our dietary attitude towards fat, salt, sugar, corn syrup, gluten, dairy and so on.

In fact, we're constantly uncovering new threats to our health, some of which are within our ability to change.

Some tell us that sitting is the new smoking. Extended periods of inaction pose a special danger to seniors.

So we encourage healthy and active lifestyle choices, as does Bill 149.

While I admire the spirit in which this legislation was brought toward, and while I recognize that it comes from a place of legitimate concern, the hybrid nature of 149 scatters its legislative focus. It's ambitious; no question. But what it boasts in scope, it lacks in specific and practical detail. It also overlaps with very specific measures outlined in Bill 131, as I indicated earlier. It pains me to say that because of those factors, I cannot support the proposed legislation at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today to join this debate, to encourage members of this House to lend their support to Bill 149.

I want to recognize the determination and the commitment of my colleague the member for Nickel Belt, who has persevered over many years to bring this legislation forward to help Ontarians make healthy decisions about what they eat, and, hopefully, not to smoke. Her personal background in health care, I think, makes her uniquely qualified to speak to these issues and gives her a deep and real understanding of the costs to human health, not to mention the financial costs to the health care system, of failing to take action.

This bill, as we've heard, focuses on two very important issues that have been recognized as critical to population health over the years: the menu labelling of fast food—not just calories, but also sodium—and stronger tobacco-control measures to discourage young people from starting to smoke.

First, Bill 149 would provide consumers with calorie and sodium information for food at large chain restaurants. This would allow parents to make healthy choices for their families and would allow adults to make informed nutritional choices. We know that Canadians want these options.

Envirofocus research published a report in December 2013 that showed that 92% of Canadian adults said it's important to know the nutritional breakdown of the foods they eat. Nine out of 10 felt that they would be missing pertinent information if they only got calorie counts. In addition to calories, they wanted to know the total amounts of fat, sodium, trans fats and sugars.

This research was conducted and made public by the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, showing that businesses involved in the fast-food sector recognize the importance of listening to their customers and understanding their customers' needs and preferences.

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In fact, as we've heard, several people have mentioned Tim Hortons. A number of restaurant companies across Canada are already taking action to document this kind of information to make it available to their customers.

The difference is that this private member's bill would make the information available at point of sale. Customers wouldn't have to ask for it and have staff search for it. It would be available on the menu display board when a customer goes into a fast food restaurant and it would be available at all restaurants across Ontario. Point-of-sale menu labelling helps people make more informed decisions about their food choices, and it also makes a difference in the choices people make.

There was a recent research study by a University of Waterloo professor that showed that publishing this information, making consumers aware of the calorie and sodium counts, can trigger concrete changes in behaviour and switch people's decisions about what they're going to eat.

From a public policy perspective, this is more than just good customer service; it's an essential contribution to maintaining population health. We've heard about the number of Canadian children who are overweight and the much greater risk of being overweight as adults when children are overweight in their youth. We've also heard about the significant health complications associated with being overweight and the financial cost to our health care system—about \$1.6 billion annually. As my colleague the member for Nickel Belt said, the bill will not in and of itself reverse these statistics, but it's an important step in the right direction.

The other aspect of the bill around banning smokeless tobacco products and all new flavoured tobacco is similar to the provisions in Bill 131, which we're currently debating, but it goes further in including smokeless tobacco products or e-cigarettes. We know that reducing social exposure to tobacco smoking is important so that smoking is not normalized for young people, to discourage young people from starting smoking or discouraging reformed smokers from relapsing.

I urge the support of MPPs in this Legislature for this bill. It's an important and much-needed step to a healthier Ontario. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to speak to Bill 149 and to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt for bringing it forward. I'd like to let her know that she is equally as entertaining and great to listen to as the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Another little bit of news is the hockey game: The women's hockey game is tied up at 2-2, for those of us—apparently there were two goals in the last four minutes.

I think that the idea of menu labelling's time has come. It's something that we can all agree on here. I think the provisions put forward in Bill 149 are reasoned and measured in terms of how they would affect business. I think it's important that we give people the information they need to make healthy choices, because it's a determinant of health. If we can help prevent disease, chronic disease that's caused through obesity, by making people aware of what high sodium levels mean to their health and their longevity, I think we're a lot farther forward.

I would like to mention as well, though—the member from Windsor-Tecumseh made a comment about ice cream, and there would definitely have to be some menu labelling at Baskin Robbins and Dairy Queen, because I'm affected by that addiction. Maybe it will slow me down a little bit.

On flavoured tobacco, anything that we can do to make sure that young people don't get hooked on tobacco is really—having been a former smoker myself, actually smoking from age 16 to the age of 23, I quit. Then I started smoking again when I was 31, and then I quit again when I was 40. I don't know why—but that's how powerful an addiction that is. I don't think that we can do enough.

I know that the member from Ottawa-Orléans here put forward a bill a few years ago on the banning of power wands. I supported that as well, although I was not in the Legislature at the time.

Again, I'd like to thank the member from Nickel Belt. I will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to Bill 149. Good intentions: We all have them. Unfortunately, good intentions alone do not form the basis of good policy. So the question is, will the proposed bill result in the desired outcomes, or will it add unnecessary regulations and red tape on law-abiding people and businesses for no good purpose?

It is becoming startlingly obvious to anyone who is paying attention that as government grows and increasingly meddles in people's lives, outcomes worsen. Social engineering attempts by government create resentment, harden attitudes of targeted populations, and, in the case

of prohibitions, provide black market opportunities for products that have attained a certain cachet due to their prohibited status.

Substituting decisions made by individuals with government decisions gives people a false sense of security and creates a dependency. It is far better for government to respect individuals' ability to make decisions for themselves and accept responsibility and the consequences of those decisions. This is the fundamental basis of a free society.

People's freedom to choose should be respected by government. People should be allowed to choose the food they want to eat and to make their own lifestyle choices without being hectored by those who purport to know better.

I cannot support this bill, because it is an ineffective attempt to protect people from themselves while it increases job-killing costs and red tape for businesses.

Once again, politicians are demonstrating that they do not trust people to do the right thing. We must remember that we are a free and a democratic society, and with freedom comes the opportunity and responsibility for people to accept the benefits and consequences of their actions. This freedom is a right that was earned on battlefields and in Parliaments over the centuries. We should not give up freedom so easily on the altar of good intentions. It is a right that defines the essence of this land and this institution. It is our duty as parliamentarians to be diligent about protecting this right: our freedom.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for the debate. We now return to the member for Nickel Belt, who has two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: When I opened my speech, I made it clear that I had been working on those two issues for a long time. Well, I didn't do that on my own. I always want to say thank you to Dr. Penny Sutcliffe. She is behind the postcard campaign. She's the chief medical officer of health in Sudbury.

I also have many, many organizations that have helped along the way: the Alliance for the Prevention of Chronic Disease, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, the Bariatric Medical Institute, the Canadian Association for Enterostomal Therapy, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, the Canadian Association of Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Stroke Network, the Canadian Women's Health Network, the Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses, the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Orthopaedic Nurses Association, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Childhood Obesity Foundation, the College of Family Physicians, the DisAbleD Women's Network, Dietitians of Canada, the chair of hypertension prevention and control at the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Elementary Teachers' Federation, the Fitness Industry Council of Canada, Hypertension Canada, Leslie Beck Nutrition Consulting, the

Ontario Home Economics Association, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, the Prevent Cancer Now board, the Public Health Physicians of Canada, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Sport Matters Group, Ottawa, and the University of Ottawa Heart Institute.

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To this, I have to thank my big sponsor, freezetheindustry.com. If you haven't seen Freeze the Industry, go see them: "Freeze the Industry is advocating for a tobacco moratorium, a ban on all new tobacco products not yet introduced in Canada and an alteration to current products. We need a moratorium because the tobacco industry continues to develop new, innovative products that evade and exploit tobacco legislation designed to protect the health of young Canadians; recruit and retain youth and young adults, since 81% of current and former smokers begin smoking before the age of 18—and they appear to be less harmful than existing products when in reality they continue to contain the same dangerous ingredients." They're called freezetheindustry.com. They are super cool. Go see them on YouTube and on the Internet.

J'aimerais remercier tous ceux qui m'ont aidée à amener ce projet de loi. Merci.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

Mr. Takhar moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to temporary help agencies /
Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuing to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I do that, actually, I have a fractured leg; I might not be able to stand very long, so just bear with me.

Temporary help agencies have become an important part of our dynamic labour market. Temporary work includes seasonal, casual and/or contract work. In Ontario, there are more than 700,000 temporary workers, with a large portion employed by more than 1,300 temporary help agencies.

From 1997 to 2012, the share of Ontario's workforce engaged in temporary work gradually increased from 9% to 13%. That is a 44% increase. In certain sectors, this increase actually has been up to 22% from 14% when comparing 1997 to 2012, and that is an increase of about 60%.

The continued increase of temporary employment may be attributed to a number of factors. For example, employers might find mixed permanent and temporary employment more desirable as it provides them with the ability to adjust payroll costs in response to the cyclical nature of the economy. In other words, this allows businesses to more easily expand or reduce their staff according to the business activity levels.

In addition, temporary employment also offers both employers and employees an opportunity to get to know each other before making a permanent commitment. For example, to employers, temporary employees provide an opportunity for extended evaluation purposes. Likewise, employees can assess the quality of the type of work to be performed, as well as the workplace environment, before making a commitment.

There is no doubt in my mind that temporary workers can offer organizations a certain flexibility that can accommodate quick changes in line with market demands while reaping cost savings in labour and other expenses.

Temporary help agencies employ people to assign them to perform work on a temporary basis for clients of the agency. Work assignments may be short-term, long-term or open-ended. Such employees are called assignment employees. Based on the research conducted by different organizations, some workers found work through temporary agencies to keep busy or to have flexible employment. Other workers went to agencies because they needed immediate work, for financial reasons, or had an employment background and experience that was not attractive to regular employees. For example, recent immigrants use temporary work agencies to get a foothold as they discover that their past job experience and qualifications are often not being recognized by the employers. It is very clear to me that temporary work agencies do serve a very important market niche to meet the needs of the employers and employees.

As the trend of temporary employment is growing, our government, over the past several years, has taken a number of steps and made amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to clarify and strengthen the rules and regulations dealing with temporary health agencies. I would like to recognize the work of the member from Brampton West, who actually had the ball rolling on this issue and made considerable improvements with regard to temporary help agencies and temporary workers.

Even after all of those efforts, temporary jobs are generally seen as poor quality. On average, they don't pay as much as permanent positions and have fewer benefits. This makes it tougher for temporary workers to support their families and build up savings for retirement.

Due to the job insecurity inherent in many temporary jobs, individuals may find it difficult to plan their future. Uncertainty over one's employment status may even lead to high levels of stress and family issues. It is also important to note that, in general, average wages for temporary jobs are lower than permanent jobs, and temporary workers may not qualify for certain employee benefits, training and advancement opportunities.

Based on current and emergent trends, temporary employment and temporary employment agencies in Ontario can be expected to continue to grow into the future. As such, it is essential for people entering the labour force to be aware of this changing dynamic of employment and the steadily changing realities of Ontario's labour market.

The proposed legislation is based on the feedback that I have received from my constituents, and during the leadership run of my party. In that context, I am proposing to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

The purpose of this bill is three main goals. The first is to require all temporary employment agencies to have and maintain a licence to operate in Ontario. This bill, if passed, will establish a licensing regime for temporary help agencies. Temporary help agencies will be prohibited from operating in Ontario without a licence. This bill clearly sets out the procedure for applying for a licence from the director, as well as powers to suspend and revoke the licence.

The second goal is to ensure that employees working under temp agencies receive 80% of the total wages paid for the work they do. Let me be very clear that if this bill is passed, temporary help agencies will be required to pay their employees at least 80% of the amount the agency charges its clients for the employee's services. This will ensure that temporary workers are fairly paid for the work that they perform. Temporary help agencies will have to submit a semi-annual report to the minister, certifying that they are in compliance with this requirement.

Finally, this bill is designed to ensure that employers must ensure that no more than 25% of the total number of hours that are worked in their organization are performed by temporary employees. I have heard examples that some workers have worked through temporary agencies with the same client for an extended period of time, in some cases over 10 years. This, by any reasonable standard, is not temporary work; it is permanent work. These temporary workers deserve better treatment and protection.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They work hard and create the majority of new jobs. We, as legislators, must continue to create an environment in which our businesses can continue to grow and succeed.

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It is for this reason that the proposed legislation provides an exemption from this requirement for employers with less than 10 employees and employers that may experience a temporary increase in business volumes. We need to provide our businesses and organizations the flexibility to deal with unexpected increases in workload or unforeseen situations.

Mr. Speaker, let me assure you that I do understand the issues and challenges of our business community. The proposed legislation strikes a fair balance between the desire and the need for protection of the working conditions of the temporary workers and the need of the

employer to have flexibility to deal with the ever-changing business environment.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you a little bit about what I went through. I came to Canada in 1974. I faced the same challenges as most new immigrants face today to settle in a new country and a new environment. New immigrants continue to face great hurdles to have their qualifications and experiences recognized by employers.

Also, our young people are increasingly in need of better opportunities. They are always looking for that first break in their chosen field. Our young people are increasingly looking for that first opportunity—

Interjections.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Looks like Canada won, did they?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Oh, that's good. I want to congratulate the women's hockey team at the Olympics. Congratulations.

Applause.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, my first break in my field was to fill a temporary maternity leave position. If I recall correctly, temporary work agencies were not common in 1974, but this temporary position gave me the opportunity to prove myself and to secure full-time employment with the same employer. This paved the way for me for a very rewarding and successful career in finance and the business world over the next two decades. Mr. Speaker, frankly, if I hadn't have gotten that opportunity, I would not be standing in this esteemed House today and speaking and advocating on behalf of temporary workers.

This is an issue that affects temporary workers province-wide, and I look forward to a healthy discussion. As always, I look forward to comments from all of my colleagues in the Legislature from all sides, and encourage them to offer constructive ideas to move this important piece of legislation forward.

My intention with this proposed legislation is to put a workable and practical frame around the issues that are facing the assigned temporary workers. I am very open to any other suggestions or amendments from my respectable colleagues, as long as these suggestions can address the issues that I have outlined above in a concrete way.

The employment trend in Ontario and around the world is changing continuously, and our rules, regulations and legislation must continue to keep pace with the ever-changing requirements and needs of the workers and employers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It gives me great pleasure to confirm that the Canadian women's ice hockey team has won the gold medal at Sochi.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt on a point of order.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to correct my record. When I introduced the postcard, I said that they were from my health unit. They are from

the Canadian Cancer Society, but collected by my health unit. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a privilege to rise today and to have been asked to speak to this private member's bill this afternoon.

Bill 159, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2014, as we all know, is a new bill introduced by the Minister of Government Services this week. In fact, I saw the first copy of this only a couple of days ago, Speaker, so I haven't had a lot of time to look at it, but, of course, we're here debating it today.

This bill amends statutes relating to employment licensing and employer prohibition for temporary help agencies. The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to establish a licensing regime for temporary help agencies and require them to pay their employees at least 80% of the amount the agency charges its clients for the employee's services. It also requires employers to ensure that no more than 25% of the hours worked by their employees are performed by assignment workers.

Now, Speaker, we understand the goals of this bill, but we do have a couple of concerns. I'm glad that the minister is willing to listen to the concerns raised in this debate today. The concern predominantly that I have is that it adds yet another provincial licensing regime. I think that's the big concern that we're going to raise with this bill. At a time when the province already has enough unnecessary red tape—and, I might add, costly red tape—we think that this bill adds another layer to businesses and to employers.

We are concerned as well—I was speaking to Bill 146 yesterday, the Minister of Labour's bill—that there's just been little consultation with job creators across Ontario. I think this bill, again—I don't believe there's been a lot of consultation. I know, as the labour critic for the official opposition, we certainly haven't had a lot of time to look at this bill. I think maybe it's about 48 hours.

The other concern I'd like to raise is, I'm curious to know if there are going to be WSIB implications with this bill. Of course, we know of the challenges at the WSIB now with the unfunded liability, so I would hope that the member consulted with the WSIB. I'd go back to Bill 146 yesterday, where the management team—it's my understanding that WSIB weren't a part of that discussion when the minister drafted that bill.

Speaker, Ontario has reached a tipping point, of course, with a decade of overspending under this government, a decade of high unemployment. In fact, here in Ontario we're 86 months above the national average when it comes to unemployment.

This bill doesn't actually do anything to actually create jobs in Ontario. I know we've been on the record a number of times for many, many months—in fact, since the Premier was coronated just over a year ago—that the government needs to bring forward ideas and bills that

are actually going to create jobs, or create the conditions for employers to create jobs in Ontario.

We need to have an honest debate about the kind of Ontario we want and the plan to help get us there. Any legislation that affects the labour file will directly affect our job creators, and we need to establish the environment we need to create jobs, as I just was saying.

We feel, in the official opposition and in our PC caucus, that Ontario can do a lot better. Our caucus is looking forward to continuing putting out our fresh, bold and new ideas to fix current problems while looking into the long-term interests of Ontario.

Speaker, with that, I raise a couple of concerns with this bill. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 159 today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M. Taras Natyshak: C'est vraiment un plaisir d'être ici et de parler en deuxième lecture du projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire.

Aussi, il me donne plaisir de féliciter notre équipe olympique des femmes qui a juste récemment gagné la médaille d'or.

I'm a little bit excited here, of course, because I was watching in the back in the members' west gallery as our women's Olympic team just secured the gold medal. I have to say I'm extremely proud that one of our very own in the riding of Essex, Meghan Agosta, is a part of that team. She's a two-time Olympic medallist—gold Olympic medallist. I can't wait for her to come back to the riding adorned with Olympic gold. I'm pretty excited, Mr. Speaker. I was back in the members' gallery watching that game intensely—what a crazy game. When they scored, there were high-fives in the back between myself, the member from Barrie, and a couple of other folks who were back there. It's amazing what sport can do to bring us all together. Of course, politics is a sport unto itself, but that brought us together there.

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In the spirit of collegiality, I guess, I'm going to speak favourably of this bill, the bill brought forward by the minister, and also highlight that it's about time. It's certainly a bill that we in the NDP caucus see as one that is needed and one that addresses some of the issues of oversight and standards within temporary employment agencies.

The bill amends the Employment Standards Act to establish a licensing regime for temporary help agencies and requires them to pay their employees at least 80% of the amount the agency charges its clients for its employees' services. It also requires the employers to ensure that no more than 25% of the hours worked by their employees are performed by assignment employees.

This is a very, very important component to this bill. Imagine that some employees out there receive less on an hourly basis than the fees recovered by the temporary agency that is indeed employing them. That certainly doesn't seem fair in today's society and in our modern

labour market. I think that the correction built into this piece of legislation is one that all members should be supportive of. We all know that a dollar is certainly stretched further when the employee feels that they're secure in their job, that they're valued and that they can continue on to progress in their working careers. It's difficult to do that when you are working in a business where you are working alongside someone who just makes that wage; they don't have to have a fee attached to it or a portion of their wage isn't garnished. This, I think, certainly levels the playing field within the temporary employment agencies.

The other component is that it requires employers to ensure that no more than 25% of the hours worked by their employees are performed by assignment employees. I think this a problem that needs to be addressed. Specifically, I can say that in Windsor and Essex county, we've seen a real increase in the prevalence of employment agencies over the years. I spoke to it yesterday during the debate under Bill 146, which was tabled by the Minister of Labour. In Windsor, there was a time, within my generation, where my friends could simply apply, under their own merits and any work experience they had, to the Big Three, as we call them in Windsor: GM, Ford and Chrysler. They got jobs. They walked in off the—this was 15 years ago, Speaker.

Nowadays that's absolutely unheard of, not only within the Big Three, the tier 1 suppliers, but the tier 2 and the tier 3. No longer can you simply apply on your own merits to these jobs. The companies have relied on temporary job placement agencies to fulfill their labour demands because of some of the regulations that allow them to skirt their responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act. In fact, we've seen a prevalence of employees under temporary agencies being hired for 89 days, just under the threshold of having to be responsible for those employees' rights under the Employment Standards Act, and then let go and then have to go through that entire process again.

It's high time that we addressed these issues under the Employment Standards Act as it relates to temporary agencies. Again, I congratulate the minister for bringing them forward.

Our caucus is, however, a little bit worried that this bill won't really ever see the light of day in terms of receiving royal assent, and we question why the provisions weren't built into the bill that was debated yesterday, Bill 146, which was introduced by the Minister of Labour. That, of course, has some components that deal with temporary agencies, and that's an omnibus-type bill. These could have very well fit within the context of that bill, and we would certainly have been supportive of them because we see them as important first steps to addressing that income inequality gap that is created by the prevalence of temporary work in this province. Nevertheless, we're supportive of the thrust of the bill, we're supportive of the general goal of the bill. I welcome the debate here in the House and thank the minister again for introducing it.

Speaker, I am splitting my time with my friend, my esteemed colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who will take up the remainder of my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the government House leader and Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for interrupting the flow of debate. I just want to welcome the Honourable Rob Norris, who is the Minister of Advanced Education, from Saskatchewan. He's in Ontario visiting us. He's a good friend from my time at training, college and universities; our present minister you see there. I think all members would want to welcome him here to Queen's Park today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. We do welcome you to the Ontario Legislature.

Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: First of all, I want to commend my colleague from Mississauga–Erindale for bringing forward this very important bill.

Temp agencies have a very important role and a very good role in our society for businesses that go through cyclical adjustments from time to time. They allow them to adjust their costs in accordance with their activity levels throughout the year.

However, temp agencies have also become a source of many issues and problems—problems that are regularly brought to my attention, and, I'm sure, to the attention of many of my other colleagues. For example, temporary jobs are, in general, lower paying, even for the same job being performed by a permanent worker. This really complicates things for temporary workers who can't save up for their retirement, for their future or for their kids' education. It creates a high level of stress within hard-working families, and that leads to further problems.

Temporary agencies are commonly used by people who have a relatively low skill level, as well as new immigrants. Temp agencies, instead of helping these people get further ahead in their lives, are actually preventing them from becoming contributing members of our society. I think these are the main reasons why this bill was brought forward and the main reasons for why we need this bill.

The first aspect of this bill, which I think is very important, is that temporary agencies under this bill would have to be licensed. Without a licence, a temporary agency cannot operate in the province of Ontario.

The second part, which is also very important, is that 80% of the total wages must be paid to the temporary worker. What I hear a lot of times is that the temp agency is getting \$20, \$22 from the employer and they're paying the temporary worker just the bare minimum legally they have to pay, which I feel is morally wrong. Agencies must also submit a report semi-annually to the Ministry of Labour proving that they are operating within this law.

The third aspect of the bill is that no more than 25% of the total hours can be performed by temporary workers. I often hear of people working—and as the member from

Mississauga–Erindale mentioned, people are working at the same temp agency for 10 years, which is not right. "Temporary" means temporary, and this is not the way we should be treating people.

With respect to the 25% of the total hours not being performed by temporary workers, we would also keep in mind small businesses and new entrepreneurs, who are a very important part of our economy. We would look at, in this bill, exempting small businesses that have 10 or less employees.

In addition to this bill, earlier on this week, our government also introduced Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, which has the same theme and similar goals to this bill, and builds upon this bill, builds upon all the work that we have done. We're doing all this to make sure that temporary workers get the respect that they deserve, and the bottom line should be that "temporary" means temporary.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 159, the Employment Standards Amendment Act regarding temporary help agencies. But before I get started, there is a lot of jargon that's used when discussing temporary work agencies, and it would be helpful to those watching at home to explain what some of these terms are.

Contract work can, in fact, give many employers a more flexible workforce, allowing them to quickly respond to ebbs and flows in our fragile economy. This type of work can also suit highly skilled employees who don't want to be tied down to a single employer, but can also be problematic for workers living paycheque to paycheque with little job security.

You'll hear of talk such as "vulnerable workers" and "precarious work." A Law Commission of Ontario report stated: "In Ontario today there are fewer full-time, well-paid jobs with good benefits and more precarious jobs with lower wages, poor job security, few benefits and little control over working conditions. Workers doing this kind of work are 'vulnerable' because of the job insecurity and other conditions."

In their report, the law commission found that an estimated 22% of Ontario workers are in fact in low-wage, unstable employment. This is a reality that faces our province after a decade of Liberal rule. Ontario's economy has been driven into the ditch. In Kathleen Wynne's Ontario, there is a strong focus on minimum wage and temporary help agencies, because those are the only jobs left for a lot of people.

In the past, people in this province could look forward to getting a good job. Now the Ontario dream is just to find any job. More and more Ontarians, especially our youth, are turning to minimum wage jobs and temporary jobs because it's better than nothing. In looking specifically at the bill, the first thing that it sets out to do is to create a new licensing regime for temporary work agencies.

In my few years here at Queen's Park, I have seen this government introduce or increase a staggering number of fees. Any time they propose another licensing regime, we want to know that it will accomplish what it sets out to do and will not negatively impact the province, and I think that's fair.

There are certainly bad apples out there in the temporary agency industry. We've all heard horror stories of certain agencies holding onto pay, taking too large a percentage from their employees and in general taking advantage of workers who are desperate for employment. But, at the same time, there are many reputable agencies that garner positive reviews from their employees.

This bill places a cap on how many temporary workers an employer can have on the books. The bill states, "Every employer shall ensure that the total number of hours worked by assignment employees in a workweek does not exceed 25% of the total number of hours worked by all employees, including assignment employees, in that workweek." However, the bill does also provide an exemption for employers who experience a temporary increase in business volume. In my riding, there is a lot of seasonal work in the agricultural sector, so I'm glad to see this exemption in the bill.

At the end of the day, we need to ensure that this bill does what it's intended to do, and that is to help the workers of this province of Ontario. We need to be careful that there are no unintended consequences in this bill. For the companies that are playing by the rules, that are doing the right thing by their employees, we cannot make it even more difficult to run their businesses in this province. The companies that are taking unfair advantage of their employees who have nowhere else to turn, of course, should be accountable, to the full extent of the law.

I look forward to hearing what employees and employers alike have to say about this bill in committee, so let's take a sensible approach to this issue, and let's make sure it helps our province's workers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm very pleased today to stand up and speak in favour of the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2014, introduced by my neighbour and mentor in many ways—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Hear, hear.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, he has been there for me, the member of provincial Parliament for Mississauga-Erindale.

The first thing that struck me when I read this bill was how well-crafted it was for a private member's bill, which just speaks to the experience this member brings not only to this file but to legislation in general and the years of experience he has had being an excellent minister of the crown. Thank you so much for your service.

The goal of this bill is very simple. All that we're trying to do is ensure that people who are temporary workers get a fair wage and that temporary work is just that: temporary. When you hear that somebody has been

temping for 10 years, that is not temping. At that point, it ought to be permanent. That's essentially what this bill is trying to do, and I'm not sure if there's anybody in this Legislature who can argue against the goals of the bill. How can you argue against saying that temporary workers ought to get a fair wage and that temporary work ought to be temporary, not permanent?

I've heard some criticism from the official opposition, and I did want to speak to that. In particular, I wanted to speak to one issue—which is not related to the bill but I do feel it merits a response—which is when the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex suggested that the Premier was coronated. I take exception to that, because it betrays a lack of understanding of the parliamentary system we have in Canada. I am sure the member ought to know better than to insinuate something like that.

The second thing that I heard from the loyal opposition was that they're against the licensing part of the bill just because it's red tape. Well, you can't be against something just because it's red tape. You have got to be against it because you feel it won't work. If you said to me, "I don't want licensing because I don't think it's going to help get to the end goal," that's a fair criticism. But to just say, "We don't want licensing because it's going to add red tape," that's meaningless. Come out with a good reason not to license rather than just some general black hole, "It's red tape; it's too much government." If it's going to work and give us the end result, which is a fair wage for our temporary workers and ensuring that temporary work is temporary, I think we should have licensing. If you think it won't work, give me a better way. I know that this MPP has told me he is open to suggestions, that he is open to amending the bill, as required, in committee. All I've heard is criticism; what I've not heard is constructive suggestions that would make the bill better.

I would, indeed, like to thank very much the third party for their support and their supportive comments.

Finally, I'm just going to wrap up. I began by saying this is a well-crafted bill, and the reason I say that is because it balances the need to have a fair system for temporary workers with the need to ensure that our small businesses are not overly burdened—hence the exemption for small business: Anybody with 10 workers or fewer is not going to be covered by this. I know that as far as consultation goes, having spoken to the member, that he has extensively consulted not just with employers in general, but with temporary agencies. In fact, he sat down with temporary agencies to talk to them about what level of profit would be reasonable—I think it's the 80% rule: Is that fair? He actually spoke to them before he came up with that number. All in all, I'm very supportive, and I'm delighted to be here speaking to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to acknowledge the member from Mississauga-Erindale. When he was minister, which he is not now because of his own personal reasons, I had great time for him. He's a very

thoughtful gentleman, and I respect that. Even the tone of his remarks today was commendable. In fact, it was done in an offering of collegiality and co-operation. I think in that context, my remarks, after 30 years of working in industry and seeing it and having some background in HR—here's the deal: For young people today, a job for life, for 30 years, is finished, unfortunately. I say that rather sadly because we had the model Parliament here this year with the young leaders of the future. In that context, there's no job that will last for 30 years, whether it's Nortel or whether it's General Motors or whether it's even Research In Motion. No job will last 30 years. The technology will change, the skill sets will change; That's the climate.

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But here's what I tell my five children: Basically, I worked for 30 years. Let's say, for simple math, I made \$50,000 a year. That's \$1.5 million. I think what will happen today is they'll work for 20 years and make the same amount of money, unless they keep their skill sets up. Because whether it's law—which is all online now; all the books—it's all toast. All I'm saying is that the skill sets, whether it's making watches or whether it's painting an airliner with nanotechnology paint that is photosensitive and runs the electricity on an airplane—that's the future. You have printers now that make products. You can order them, send them a copy of the little switch that's broken on your printer, and they'll make it for you through printer technology, 3-D printers. It is fabulously changing. That's the context.

I think there are provisions within the total number of hours, but there are a number of exemptions that you provided in the bill. Here's one modest concern, though: It does run into the government Bill 146, and I think our critic from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who has done a fabulous job, mentioned it in his remarks; it would be rather important to look at those from yesterday's debate on Bill 146. Those are the implications for WSIB itself. The WSIB is staggering under a \$13-billion deficit because there are fewer people paying into it. It's a payroll tax. We have to find new ways of funding that kind of organization so injured workers are protected.

Minimum working hours—I think employment standards need to be modernized so that we have jobs for the future. Without jobs, there's no hope for young people, and we need to create the environment for investment, working co-operatively with business as well as unions to have jobs for the future—a good discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let's cut to the chase here. The government has been in power for 11 years—10 years going on 11 years. They've been fully aware of this problem. They've known about the problem regarding temporary job agencies for years.

In 2009, this government tried to implement some changes to improve the situation, but they failed. The members across from the Liberal Party, from Brampton West, from Mississauga—Brampton South and

Brampton—Springdale, are bombarded daily from their constituents, because I know this is a top-three issue in Brampton. This is a major issue across the GTA. Temporary job agencies are exploiting workers, and this is no surprise.

The fact that this government has just put forward a bill, Bill 146, a government bill, that addresses temporary job agencies but coincidentally leaves out all of the important components to address the problems facing temporary workers in our province, to me can't be a coincidence. The fact that they left out all the important ingredients like the fact that we need to see temporary workers transition into a permanent job; like the fact that temporary workers sometimes see almost half of their paycheck being kept back by temporary job agencies—these are some of the key problems that are facing people in Ontario, but the government completely failed to add those components to the government bill. But they'd have us believe that they care about it because they bring forward a private member's bill that talks about it.

Now, if this was the opposition, if this was the third party, I would commend them because they would be showing leadership by saying, "This is what we need to do," but they're the government. They could actually do this. They could actually implement this if they wanted to. The fact that the government is not bringing this forward as a government bill, the fact that this government is bringing forward a private member's bill regarding the key problems facing temporary workers in the province shows that they're not serious about fixing the problems. It absolutely casts doubt on their sincerity about dealing with this problem, because if they wanted to deal with this problem in a meaningful way, they could have.

I challenge the Liberal government to add this private member's bill that's brought forward by the member from Mississauga—Erindale—I challenge them to include that into the government bill. Then we would say that this government is taking this issue seriously, because the workers in this province deserve more.

Let's look at the reality. If the government had done something on this issue, we wouldn't have the situation that's going on right now in my riding. A company, Gate Gourmet, has laid off 50 permanent workers and replaced them. It wasn't a matter that they didn't have work and said, "Listen, we have to lay you off. We don't have enough work for you." They laid off 50 permanent workers and immediately replaced them with temporary workers who don't have benefits, who don't have job security, and who are going to receive half of the wages they used to receive. There are people who have been working at this company for years, who are experienced, who are skillful, and they're now going to be at home without a job, perhaps collecting EI if they're struggling to make ends meet. But where is the sense in that? Where was the government to protect these workers, to protect the permanent, good-paying jobs? Instead, a multinational comes in, buys out a local Canadian company and lays off permanent workers, replacing them with temporary workers. This shows very clearly that this gov-

ernment is not solving the problem, has not done enough to address the situation.

Furthermore, there's a number of problems that are still left undealt with. Currently, as the law stands, if you are hired through a temporary help agency, for the first six months, even if the company wants to hire you, they have to pay a fee. They have to pay a fee to the temporary job agency just to hire you on board. How much of a deterrent is that? That deters people from getting a permanent job. That's a serious problem.

Again, I want to stress this point: If the government was really serious about addressing the serious problem of temporary job agencies, the temporary and precarious employment that's going on in this province, if they were serious about it, they wouldn't be presenting a private member's bill. They would have added this into the temporary job agency bill that's before this Parliament right now, that's before the House right now. They would have put it into the government bill and not relegated it to an insignificant, unimportant, private member's bill.

That speaks to the fact that this government is not serious about solving this problem. Again, I challenge you to include it in your government bill if you're serious about solving this problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I always say at the outset of my remarks in this chamber, it is a pleasure for me to stand in my place today to have this opportunity to speak to this particular private member's bill.

This is, as I'm sure it's been for many who have had the chance to speak, the first opportunity to speak in formal debate since we have come back here in this calendar year, and I am delighted to stand, as I said a second ago, on behalf of the people of my community of Vaughan to speak in favour of Bill 159, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, 2014, otherwise known as An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to temporary help agencies.

I did have a chance to hear my colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville speak a little bit earlier. She went on to talk, quite appropriately and also eloquently, about the member who has sponsored this particular legislation, the member from Mississauga–Erindale. I think, as she said—if I could just very briefly echo some of the comments she made about the work, the dedication and the commitment that our member from Mississauga–Erindale has shown with respect to reaching out and consulting around the importance of this kind of legislation, for taking the initiative to move this forward. It speaks to his own skill set, to his experience and to his ability to make sure that an issue that is of great importance comes to the fore.

I was actually happy to hear members opposite, including the member from Durham, speak also about the substance of this initiative, about the individual member himself, our member from Mississauga–Erindale, who has brought this forward, who is pushing it and has done outstanding work to make this happen.

There's already been a fair bit of discussion here in the House today about some of the technical aspects of this bill. Generally speaking, members on all sides of the Legislature have an understanding of why this bill is being brought forward and what the importance is. There are statistics that have been brought to the fore in the course of this debate this afternoon, but fundamentally the purpose of the bill is make sure that we, as a province, find creative ways to better protect those who are employed through temp agencies. It will ensure more fairness and equality in regard to wages, and provide fair pay for well-performed work.

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There has been some fascinating discussion. It is really important at this point, on this particular day, that members on all sides of the House, when the opportunity will arise in mere minutes, join with the member from Mississauga–Erindale and others on this side of the House to make sure that this bill moves forward in the legislative process and gets to committee.

The member from Mississauga–Erindale has been among the first to admit, in his very eloquent remarks earlier today, that, like many other private members' bills, this is not necessarily a bill that, as it currently sits, is absolutely perfect. This is the reason we want this legislation to get to committee, where the committee members can do the work that they need to do: to analyze and conduct the research, and have the hearings to make sure that amendments come forward that will ultimately strengthen the bill, and make sure that it ends up providing relief and support for those workers who are most vulnerable in our province, as was originally intended by the member from Mississauga–Erindale.

I have heard, as others on our side of the House have heard, members opposite talk about ways to improve the bill. I think it's fantastic that the member from Mississauga–Erindale and others want to roll up their sleeves and work together on this. This is what the people of my community certainly expect, Mr. Speaker. It's what the people who have elected all of us, from communities right across the province of Ontario—to come to this place, to engage in this kind of discussion and debate about bills like this, and to make sure that, again, those who are most vulnerable, those who perhaps don't feel like they have the kind of support or reinforcement that they need to continue to be productive, to continue to earn the wages they need, to have those protections in place for their benefit—and for their families, indirectly, who they help to support with their wages and with their incomes. This is a fantastic opportunity for us to work together, to join together, to support this bill, to support Bill 159, to get this bill to committee.

In the final comments coming from members of the NDP caucus—I think it's interesting to note, not for the first time over the last number of months, that there's an awful lot of discussion emanating from that caucus that doesn't always match up and is not entirely consistent with the actions. It certainly falls far below the expectations that people in my community and others have of a party that has purported, historically, to be

relevant for the folks who find themselves at the most disadvantaged places in society. Speaker, over the last number of weeks, on issues ranging from minimum wage to public transit to many others, we have seen that particular caucus absent without leave. It's a sad comment today that they would stand in their places and criticize this member for demonstrating the leadership that he has to bring this bill forward.

I hope members of the NDP caucus and official opposition will join with us to support this bill and get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Erindale has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I really enjoyed the discussion that happened here today. I want to thank the member from Brampton West, who was very supportive of this bill; the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, who actually stole all the comments that I wanted to make right now; and the member from Vaughan for very, very supportive comments. I also want to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; the member from Essex—especially the member from Essex, for his incredible support—the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex; and also the member from Durham. He used to be my critic in a couple of portfolios. I want to thank him for his remarks as well.

I was a little bit disappointed with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He said it should have been a government bill, or it should have been included in a government bill. Mr. Speaker, my understanding, based on 10 years of experience in this Legislature, is that the responsibility for passing the bill lies with the Legislature, here, whether it's a government bill or a private member's bill. So he's really abdicating his responsibility in that regard if he says that a private member's bill cannot be passed just because it's a private member's bill; that it should be a government member's bill.

Anyway, I'm very, very thankful to everybody for their remarks. As I said, I think that this legislation strikes a fair balance between the needs of temporary workers and also the needs of small businesses—the people who will need flexibility and the businesses who will need flexibility.

As I said before, I'm open to suggestions. I haven't heard a lot of suggestions, but I'm open to suggestions, so long as they meet the needs, at the end of the day, of the temporary workers whose issues need to be addressed by this legislation and by this Legislature. So I look forward to those comments. I'm prepared to work with everyone who has some concrete ideas to move this bill forward.

MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON
DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR
DU MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON

Mr. Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day / Projet de loi 142, Loi proclamant le Jour du major William Halton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's my privilege to rise in the House today to speak on my private member's bill, Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in Ontario.

In 2016, Halton region will mark 200 years from the time that it received its name from its founding father, Major William Halton. The people of what was then Halton county could not have foreseen that it would one day become the fastest-growing and culturally diverse municipality in Canada, with one of the highest qualities of life anywhere in North America.

Given the county is braced by Lake Ontario, it involves about a third of its area in the Niagara Escarpment. It's got ski hills. It's got hiking trails. It's got parks. It is truly one of the jewels of Ontario where you can live, raise a family, work and find a wonderful place to live. Halton region, as well as Ontario, owes a debt of gratitude—all of this—to William Halton.

It is interesting to note that Halton county was the only one in Upper Canada to be named for a private secretary when most of the original counties in Ontario were named for prominent members of British royalty and famous political leaders, such as the former Lieutenant Governor Sir John Wentworth, Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington as well as the Duke of York. Their historical significance is celebrated with memorial statues and plaques in their honour, in addition to formal state funerals that punctuated the end of each of their lives. But William Halton did not have a state funeral, and even his name has disappeared from the weather-worn headstone of his burial place. He was truly a man of the people.

But who really was William Halton, and why are there so many institutions and places, including one federal riding and my own riding of Halton, named after him? Halton was a 46-year-old bachelor who was next in line to become a baronet. He entered Ontario history in 1806 as the private secretary of his long-time friend and mentor Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore, who had just been reassigned from Bermuda to head the province of Upper Canada at that time. Having arrived in what John Graves Simcoe referred to as "our royal town of York," he reported directly to the head of government in Upper Canada and was responsible for a number of administrative duties, acting as an intermediary between the public and the Lieutenant Governor, and as an adviser to him.

Lieutenant Governor Gore relied on Halton's judgment, decisiveness and ability to deal with the several contentious issues and individuals that the new Lieutenant Governor faced. Among other things, Halton was involved with securing tenders for the House of Assembly, which was a forerunner to this building in which we stand today.

He was also responsible for letters of discipline and dismissal, inquiries about land grants in the colonies, reports concerning the build-up of troops on the American side of the border, and requests for additional soldiers, arms and supplies at various points along the Canadian border at a time when tensions with the Americans were coming to a high pitch just prior to the outbreak of the War of 1812.

Halton was also involved with the actual receipt of the deeds for lands purchased from the Mississauga First Nations people. A portion of these lands would one day be named in his honour as Halton county.

A letter from Gore to Halton dated January 1808 also reveals that Halton was even involved in espionage activities related to the impending war with the Americans. Halton's conciliatory abilities were all-important in a province where individuals were antagonistic to Gore and his predecessors on the grounds that not enough was being done by the British government to secure better infrastructure and establishing improved roadways. It is difficult to get money out of government today; it was equally difficult to get money out of a government that was 4,000 miles away in those days, especially when that government was involved in a European war.

1540

Halton was the person whom Gore trusted completely, precisely because he could deal directly with the important political issues of the day and act as an effective mediator with different sectors of the populace. Halton also had dealings with the legendary Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, who formally thanked Major Halton for his offer to provide inoculations against cowpox to the First Nations people.

As the tensions with the Americans increased, so did Halton's role in keeping the government apprised of troop manoeuvres and build-up across the frontier. Officials, recognizing Halton's influence with Gore, tended to directly ask for Halton's support for their requests for more men and supplies at various border points, bypassing Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore. Gore was considered to be rather high-handed and autocratic, while Halton was approachable and compassionate.

By 1810, however, the animosity between Gore and some of his vocal critics in the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada resulted in lawsuits issued against the Lieutenant Governor in London, England. Gore received permission to return to London on a leave of absence to deal with these on the eve of the War of 1812.

Halton accompanied Gore to London, but he continued to work closely with colleagues and officials in Upper Canada, often taking their petitions directly to the British government. Throughout the War of 1812, William Halton continued to apply his considerable administrative and conciliatory skills in helping to produce additional assistance from the British government for this province of Upper Canada. Remember that this was taking place during the Napoleonic Wars and this was a minor skirmish in the minds of most of the British, and therefore getting their attention to supply this war was a

monumental task, and William Halton rose to that task admirably.

When the town of York was attacked and its Parliament building was burned, Halton was instrumental in requesting funds to help rebuild that building—again, a forerunner of the House that we stand in today.

Halton was eager to return to Upper Canada. He and Gore did return in April 1815. Gore's second term began, among other things, with the establishment of schools and school boards throughout the province. To demonstrate his esteem for his private secretary, Halton county was named in his honour on March 22, 1816. Three days later, on March 25, Halton was appointed to the newly created position of Provincial Agent for Upper Canada. This appointment meant that Halton had to return to London to work on behalf of Upper Canada with the Colonial Office in London. It was a huge promotion. The Colonial Office was where everything in the British Empire took place.

Halton was familiar with everyone's perspectives, and he was likewise trusted by all who came in contact with him, so there was none better to fulfill this important role of mediator between the Colonial Office and the province. It was during this time in this position that Halton revisited his earlier work on behalf of the veterans, and their families, of the War of 1812, and that in a most aggressive manner. On August 25, 1818, Halton, in a letter to the Colonial Office, asserted that no satisfaction or justice for those who had defended the province of Upper Canada had yet materialized. Halton even had the audacity to say that the Americans were far more progressive with assistance for their own veterans.

While Halton's pleas fell on deaf ears, he refused to give up. However, it wasn't until 60 years after the war had ended that Upper Canada veterans of the War of 1812 finally received a pension based on Halton's earlier demands.

Halton's health began to seriously deteriorate, and he finally succumbed to his illness on September 22, 1821. He was buried in St Johns Wood cemetery in London.

The author of the defining biography of William Halton, entitled *Halton's Heritage*, John McDonald, is with us today in the Legislature.

Applause.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He is accompanied today with his brother, Fred. I want to take this opportunity to commend John for all his work in bringing every known detail about the person of William Halton to life.

With us also is Mr. Harry Andrew, who is Major William Halton's great-great-grandnephew. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

I would like to end my remarks by quoting Mr. McDonald's words: "Halton was a hard-working civic administrator, determined to fight against injustices and dedicated to the causes he believed in. William Halton has earned a place in our history and deserves to be recognized."

Mr. Speaker, I believe that with a speedy passage of An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in

Ontario, this assembly, which is the successor of the assembly of Upper Canada for which William Halton worked so hard and so tirelessly, will have fulfilled what I believe to be a duty of justice to honour the memory of Major William Halton, so that in just under two years the people of Halton region may join with all Ontarians in honouring their founding father on September 22, 2016, on the occasion of Halton county, Halton region, being 200 years old. Thank you very much, and thank you, Mr. McDonald.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to the bill. I have to admit, I knew very little of Major William Halton, and I suspect 99% of the population of Ontario knows very little about William Halton. And it's no surprise; we're talking about an individual who obviously was here a long, long time ago. I have to say, he only lived in the area for about six years, in Upper Canada, and then he immediately went back to England. One has to assume that he loved this place, and I believe he did, but we don't know much about our history; this is very true. This effort by the member from Halton will help a lot of the residents of Halton to know who he was.

We know that one of the things that he has done during his tenure as provincial agent to England from 1816 onwards was that he pressed for some form of compensation or land grants for the loyal citizens of Upper Canada who had defended the province during the War of 1812 against the Americans. My suspicion is that a whole lot of people would be grateful for some of that compensation in the form of money or land, and to that degree and to that extent, one hopes that the people who benefit from that would remember him.

We know that Halton is a fascinating area. Despite the unprecedented growth in residential development, the region is still known for agriculture and protected lands along 80 kilometres of the Niagara Escarpment. So Halton has to balance incredible development with a part of what it stands for, which is part of a watershed. It's one of the most beautiful and diverse places in Ontario, which includes the world-renowned Niagara Escarpment, a Carolinian forest, the Lake Ontario shoreline, creeks, valleys and rich wetlands. It combines an incredible mix of incredible development with a lot of valuable land that we all appreciate.

I think this is a bill that I am convinced the member knows a lot about, and I'm hoping that a lot of people will get to know Major William Halton through this. I'm hoping that he has reached out to a lot of his residents, as a result of which we have this bill today. With that, I think all I can say is that we will be supporting the bill, and hopefully the people from Halton will appreciate the efforts of this member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise in support of the member for Halton as he brings forward

Major William Halton Day Act, Bill 142. Being a long-time resident of Halton and having served in the past with Councillor McDonald a long, long time ago, it's a pleasure to be here. I have to admit, John, that I relied on a lot of your research to form my remarks today, so thank you for doing that.

1550

In essence, we are making somebody famous here today. I think John has brought it to our attention from historical perspective, and the member from Halton has brought it forward to the Legislature to perhaps spread the story a little bit more about somebody who had a lot to do with Halton region.

But I would say that about an hour ago I watched somebody from Halton make history as well. That was Brianne Jenner from Oakville, who scored the first goal on that comeback when we took that gold medal. That was something to watch, I'll tell you.

I think it is really fitting that we honour those people who have come before us and have laid the groundwork for the lifestyle that we enjoy today, those people who brought law and order to certain jurisdictions, who brought a form of government to certain jurisdictions that we live in today. They're the people who often get lost in history, and Major William Halton appears to be one of those people that, had it not been for the work of some and had it not been for just being in the right place at the right time perhaps, he would have just gone out into obscurity, as I think it's described in some of the research I did. But he was in the right place at the right time, and he was with the right person. He was with the then Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Francis Gore, and he was his secretary.

Part of Sir Francis's role, part of his mandate from the British government, was to open up certain lands for settlement. As a result of that, as you open up lands, you apply a name to them. It appears that Major Halton happened to be around when he was applying the names and said, "Why not use my name?" That appears to be how the story has been written, and it appears to be something that we are all learning a lot more about as a result of the research that has been done in the past.

Halton is a fantastic place to live, I have to tell you. I know everybody is proud of where they come from in this House, and I certainly share that pride with the member from Burlington, the member from Halton, and the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, I think it is, who shares a little bit of the region with us. It's an area that's got an incredible amount of natural beauty. It's got a conservation authority that is very, very active. It's got some conservation areas, and I think those people from the city who are looking for a day drive would be hard-pressed to find anything better than Crawford Lake or Kelso, Bronte Creek Provincial Park or Hilton Falls Conservation Area. There are places in the region that just have a natural beauty that often has been lost in other communities. It's as a result, I think, of the people who have come before us and have formed part of local governments, have formed part of regional governments.

Just to digress, when regional government came in, in the region of Halton certainly, it was very, very unpopular with the municipalities. I served for 18 years on that unpopular form of government. I have to tell you—and I never shied away from this—I always thought it was one of the most efficient forms of government I had ever seen and one of the most efficient forms of government I'd ever been involved with, as a legislator or as a councillor. But at the time, I think there was a lot of turf protection. At the time, I think a lot of the member municipalities—the Oakvilles and the Burlingtons and the Miltons and the Halton Hills and the Actons and the Georgetown—felt that they were being stripped of some of their powers and that their authority was being superseded.

I think what was really happening at the time is, we were just becoming a bit more efficient and a bit more effective in the way we were organizing our government. But people like to use things to their own political ends, and it became a bit of a political football.

But those people who did agree to serve, who did run for office, who became the CEOs and the management staff at the region of Halton, I think, over the years have proved themselves and have done a fantastic job to leave behind the sort of place that I'm extremely proud to live in. I don't think it matters what political party you belong to; you take a look at a community, and it's either a good place to raise a family, it's a good place to get a job, it's a good place to live, or it's not. I think in the case of Halton region, you would be hard-pressed to argue that it hasn't worked out in the long run.

So as a result of that, as a result of Halton county becoming Halton region, we get to know a little bit about this man, Major William Halton. John, I think, has gone to some lengths to point out some of the personal characteristics of this gentleman.

It sounds like, as has been previously mentioned, after the War of 1812, veterans on either side of the border were treated a little differently. There was a sense, certainly in the opinion of William Halton, that the Americans, having lost the War of 1812, were treating their veterans much better than the British, who had repelled the American invaders during the War of 1812. I think for an army that had won the war—some people called it a tie; I think we won the War of 1812. We weren't trying to invade anybody; we were trying to prevent ourselves from being invaded. We did that. That, to me, is a win. But it seems to me that at the time when the British Empire, as it has been stated, was involved with the Napoleonic Wars and a number of expenses around the world trying to maintain an empire—it appeared that they were giving very short shrift to the veterans who had actually protected one of their colonies.

Even though this gentleman only spent a short amount of time in Upper Canada, I think he punched well above his weight in what he left behind. I think any one of us would be proud to have a community the size of this community, the quality, the lifestyle that this community offers, named in our memory. As it has been stated

before, he died in relative obscurity. I'm sure people in Upper Canada didn't know what he was responsible for, what he had tried to do, how he had tried to make life a little bit better for those people who were living a pretty hard life as pioneers in any event.

As has been stated, he is buried in London, in St Johns Wood cemetery in London, England. He appears to be the sort of person any one of us would have loved to have known. I don't know how many “grands” were attached to the nephew, but the grand-grand-grand-nephew—you've come from very good stock. You come from somebody who I think did what they could do to make the world a little better place and, as a result of that, has been rewarded in having his name exist now off into eternity. You would think that there will always be a Halton, I would imagine, and that's named after one of your relatives. I think you should be extremely proud of that.

It's the fastest-growing municipality right now in the entire country. It's growing the way it wants to grow as well. I think you can look around the GTA or the 905 area and you look at some communities that underwent the same quick periods of growth and perhaps grew too quickly and perhaps grew the wrong way—didn't preserve the green space that should have been preserved; didn't look after the natural heritage; and didn't look after the heritage of the area itself and the memories and the people who got it to that place.

Halton has taken a different route in its growth. And I don't think anybody in Halton has ever said, “We don't want to grow. We just want to live here. We want to shut the doors and we don't want anybody else to live here.” I think Halton has always been open to growth, but it has been open to growth on its own terms. It has been open to the sort of growth that results in communities that you still want to live in.

I live in a part of Oakville that was annexed by the town of Oakville. At one point in the past, Bronte, where I live, was taken over by the town of Oakville. That was another unpopular move at the time, although I think they took a lot of Bronte's debt with them, so that was the part that was good at the time. But if you live in Oakville, you still refer to Bronte as Bronte. Bronte is not Oakville; you say, “I'm from Bronte, and Bronte is a part of Oakville.”

I think in the region of Halton, there are not many people these days who say they're from the region of Halton. I think those days are yet to come. You're still from Burlington or Milton, from Halton Hills or from Campbellville or wherever you're from in the region. I don't think we've actually achieved the standing where, if we're travelling abroad, we tell somebody that we come from Halton yet.

But certainly, I think for those people who live there and for the way that we have organized ourselves as a jurisdiction, it's become an area the entire country should be extremely proud of. It's got a very high standard of living, but at the same time, what we have done is we've attracted people from all over the world. We've got one of the most multicultural communities and populations in

the entire country, and I think it really reflects the Canadian multicultural mosaic that has come to typify this country.

1600

What a lot of people don't understand, Madam Speaker, and I think it's something we should brag about a little bit more, and Halton is a part of that, is that they say in southern Ontario today there are more people from more different cultures that are living together in peace and harmony than at any other time in the history of civilization. That's not in the past 50 years and it's not just in North America; they say there's more people from more different cultures that are living together, working together, not fighting with each other, than at any other time in the history of the planet. That's something I think we should be especially proud of, and if you look at the demographic profile of the area that is named after Major William Halton, you'll realize that really what you're seeing in Halton is a microcosm of the entire country. You're seeing the success and you're seeing the affluence and you're seeing the lifestyle that people move across the planet to be a part of, and you're seeing it be successful; you're seeing people be successful.

I want to close by thanking the people who have done the research on Major William Halton and who have joined us today, to thank his relatives for being part of the family, and to thank the member from Halton for doing such a wonderful thing and ensuring that we don't forget that this gentleman existed and he did a wonderful job for us.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day, and to commend the member for Halton for bringing this forward.

As an MPP representing one of the partner communities of Halton region, this is obviously a matter of pride. But it is not simply that, Speaker. It is also a matter of some importance. When you look at a map of Ontario, you are looking at our history as much as you are looking at our geography. History is written all around us and fills our daily lives, whether we recognize it or not. Places are named for historic figures of varied importance: statesmen and soldiers, pioneers and merchants. That history is an ongoing story in which we all play a part. It is also part of our heritage. Understanding where we came from helps us understand who we are. Understanding how we came to be here enriches our sense of what we will make of our time here. The past informs the present and the future.

Sadly, it is well known that we as Ontarians are not always as mindful of history as we might be. As legislators, we are in a unique position to ensure that our heritage is something of which we are all better aware. We can take steps, and indeed we should take steps, to ensure that Ontarians' heritage is more widely recognized and celebrated.

Ontarians need to recognize and honour their great heritage and celebrate their notable achievers, those who

spend their lives constructing the foundation on which our great province and indeed our great country are built. By doing so, we protect our shared memory.

It is fitting that we in this House turn our attention to celebrating Major William Halton. Many in this House, and I would guess most of those watching at home, may not be particularly aware of the importance of this man, though they would roughly assume that this region, like this community of Halton Hills, was named in his honour; so was the historic Halton county. Yet it is notable that until this bill was brought forward by my colleague from Halton, Major Halton's name had not been spoken in the Legislature for generations. Let us correct that here today, Speaker.

Major William Matthew Halton was an officer of the British army who was appointed in 1805 to serve as secretary to Upper Canada Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Gore. Major Halton came to Upper Canada in 1806 and served proudly in that role for a decade. While here, he was a key agent of change in the life of Upper Canada and played a significant role in the early development of Canada.

As provincial agent, Major Halton was known for his compassion. He dedicated himself to veterans' affairs, serving and assisting veterans of the War of 1812 as well as their families. He was also intimately involved in immigration, helping to settle United Empire Loyalists in Upper Canada. That work laid the foundation of Halton region, which is now recognized nationally for its welcoming communities, quality of life, vibrant business culture and dynamic growth.

Major Halton was fortunate enough to have received the honour of Halton county during his lifetime. But while such tributes would occur long after his death on September 22, 1821, he remains a figure of some mystery.

As an administrative official, Major Halton saw no statues raised in his honour. Not a single portrait was made of him. No living person knows what he looked like, and he died without issue. Even his headstone in England had lost the shape of his name.

Major Halton was honoured alongside English military heroes such as Nelson and Wellington, whose names were given to some of the townships that went on to form what is now the city of Burlington.

In life, Major Halton's reputation was well and widely known. In death, his memory grows pale and ghostly, but he need not become a footnote to history. He should be remembered for his service to Ontario and Canada. Bill 142 is an overdue step, reclaiming and celebrating the history, as well as the region that proudly bears his name.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I think everything that needs to be said about Major William Halton has probably been said at this point.

What I want to commend the member for, and those who came, is their excitement, interest and passion about

history, period, and perhaps about a figure who is not the best-known figure in history.

We as a community, and we as a government—but, broader than that, across Ontario—don't take our history seriously enough. I use the example—I was speaking to my benchmate from Trinity-Spadina—about how difficult it is even to keep heritage buildings standing, because the onus is always on an individual or a group of people to go and make the case that this is a heritage, that this is important and that this must be saved. That's backwards. In fact, we should, as governments and as a collectivity, be very concerned about keeping our history—both buildings and memories, and the lived history of those who played a part in history—alive. That's a responsibility as citizens. That's a responsibility for the next generation, and the next generation after that. It really, truly is part of the educational process.

But it's more than that. It's also part of the cultural process. We've all been lobbied today, I believe, by an association of museums, many of them small museums in our communities, many of them the result of passions of an individual or a small group of people who started these small museums, without many resources, on their own, by hook or by crook, and then got a little bit—drips and drabs—of money from government.

That's not how it should work, I might suggest. I'm glad—I'm so thankful—that the member from Halton brings this forward to us. It was an education for all of us, because I don't think anybody here knew who this person was.

I thank you for coming down, and for writing a book, and for being passionate about preserving the history of your family and your community. That's passion; that's what we should all be doing. But we shouldn't have to rely on individuals to do it. This is a collective responsibility. I would just simply say that this is an example of one person's passion coming forward as a bill that, I think we're all agreed, we will pass today.

But there's so much more, and we shouldn't have to wait. We were kind of musing that maybe one day, for the minor players—but the good people; I mean, he was a good person; he wasn't a major player, but he was a good person; he did good work—maybe one day, one of us will be memorialized in such a way. Maybe someone, in generations to come, will stand up and want to name a day after one of us. Think of the eventuality.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Jonah Schein.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Jonah Schein Day. There you go.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Anything's possible.

But again, the fact that nobody knew about him, and that really, quite frankly, most of us don't know much about our history, and we do even less to protect it, and even less to protect what's so culturally important and valuable—I think, really, that this is an example and a charge on all of us, wherever we come from and whatever riding we're in, that we do a little bit more to preserve that cultural heritage.

I think it is the responsibility of government to be proactive about preserving our heritage, not just to wait

for somebody to bring it to us but to actually proactively look at what is important in our communities and to preserve it.

That's really all I'll say. I commend the member from Halton—yes, there are some beautiful places in Halton; I also have been there. I also want to commend him for bringing forth a name that wasn't known to everyone. Often when we name days, it's a name that most people know of, if not know a lot about.

1610

And I want to thank our visitors for having a passion and seeing it through. I just wish that we could say the same of our governments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very, very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 142, an Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in the province of Ontario. It received first reading on November 28 before the Christmas recess, and we are here today, of course, to discuss it at second reading.

It's good to hear the debate from the other members. It would appear that the New Democrats and the Liberals are supportive in principle. Of course, that's a good sign and we hope that the members of their respective caucuses will want to show their support for this bill as well.

This bill was introduced by my friend and colleague the member for Halton, Ted Chudleigh, and I want to congratulate him for it. I think it's an outstanding initiative. I think it speaks to the importance of the heritage and history of this province, and I'm really pleased that we are debating it today because I feel very privileged to be one of the Halton region MPPs, having been re-elected to the Legislature in 2007 representing the newly constituted riding of Wellington—Halton Hills. So I've been privileged to represent people in Halton region since that time, some six and a half years now, and it's been a real honour and a privilege to get to know people in the town of Halton Hills and to work with my colleagues Ted Chudleigh and Jane McKenna and the others. Together, it is our privilege to serve the people of Halton Hills. So I was very pleased to be asked to speak to this legislation.

As was said, we understand that this private member's bill would establish September 22 in each year as Major William Halton Day, or, in its short form, Halton Day. Major William Halton came to Upper Canada or what is today Ontario in 1806 as the private secretary to Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Gore. He served in this capacity from 1806 to 1811, and 1815 to 1816. We know that he played a significant role in the early development of Canada as an administrator.

The Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada established the role of provincial agent, to which Halton was appointed, and while in that role Halton worked tirelessly to assist veterans and their families after the War of 1812. We can only imagine the importance of that role, but obviously it was something that was very important in those years after the War of 1812 had concluded.

Halton worked to settle the United Empire Loyalists in Upper Canada, who constituted Canada's first culturally diverse immigration. He thus set the foundations for the future of Halton region, which, as we know, is today the fastest-growing municipality in Canada and is home to nearly half a million people from various backgrounds.

Halton county was, of course, named for him, as was said, while he was still alive, which is an interesting distinction, of course, and his name came to be used in the naming of dozens of places and institutions in Halton region and in Toronto.

Halton was known and esteemed by such great historical figures as General Sir Isaac Brock, Bishop John Strachan and Henry Bathurst. His renown as a humanitarian and dedicated public servant won him the admiration of the early settlers in our province. Again, I believe it is fitting that we celebrate the life and work of William Halton. Ontarians need to recognize their great cultural heritage and celebrate notable achievers, from the heroes of yesterday and today to the builders of our province, who laid the foundation on which our lives in Ontario and Canada are built.

This bill reminds me of a piece of legislation that I brought forward in the fall: the Lincoln Alexander Day Act. I'm very pleased to see Dr. Rosemary Sadlier of the Ontario Black History Society, whom I worked with on that bill, as well as our bill to recognize Emancipation Day in the province of Ontario. Welcome again to the Legislature, Rosemary. It's wonderful to have you here. I know that we're in the month of February, which is Black History Month, and I know that there is a reception tonight at the Legislature. We certainly encourage members who are around and able to come to visit that reception. It is an important event as well.

I want to pay tribute to the member for Halton. As I said, I've had the privilege to work with him, jointly representing the interests of the people of Halton, for some time now. He was first elected, actually, in 1995, re-elected in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011, which puts him in a situation where he's one of the longest-serving members of this House. I think it has been almost 19 years now that he has served here—

Applause.

Mr. Ted Arnott:—and he deserves the credit and the applause of all members. He has done an outstanding job and he demonstrates a great commitment to his constituents at all times, a great deal of wisdom, and we hope that his service will continue in this Legislature for many, many more years to come.

When our party served in government, of course, he was involved with the ministries of finance, economic development and trade, natural resources and a number of other important responsibilities. Certainly he was one of the pillars of our caucus when we served in government, and we hope to see him in government again after the next go-round. He also had an important private member's bill that was passed into law in the late 1990s to recognize Holocaust Memorial Day, and it is something that I think is a hallmark achievement for him, and

this bill is a good follow-up to that. He is an outstanding MPP, and I feel very privileged to work with him.

He carries on the outstanding family tradition of public service that was, I think, initiated by his grandfather, the Honourable Tom Kennedy, who served in this Legislature for many, many years, representing a Peel riding. I guess it was in those days, and also for many years as the Minister of Agriculture, culminating in his tenure and service as Premier of the province of Ontario between 1948 and 1949. I know that Tom Kennedy would be very, very proud of his grandson for the outstanding tradition that he has carried on in terms of public service.

It was said that in 2016 the region of Halton will, in fact, celebrate 200 years of existence. I think it is very appropriate, then, and fitting that this bill is passed into law as part of those celebrations so that we can continue to recognize the importance and the contribution, the historical contribution, of people like Major William Halton. Again, I congratulate the member for Halton for this outstanding private member's bill, and I encourage all members to support it when it goes to the second reading vote later on this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Halton gave me the opportunity to speak for a couple of minutes. We often, as good friends, talk about the relationship between—he's the member from Halton, and that is the name of what we are talking about today; I'm the member from Durham. These are the regions. We are actually the bookends of the GTA, and we form, if you will, the perimeter of the quality of life he described. I would like to put on the record as well that Durham region will be celebrating its 40th year as a regional government this year, and I've been to a couple of the ceremonial events already.

We're bounded on the north by the Oak Ridges moraine and on the south by the shores of Lake Ontario. We're probably one of the more prosperous and vibrant areas in terms of agriculture, but also with the quality-of-life issues with fishing, sailing, skiing and golf, and I would say a great place to live. I just want to put that on the record. I want to thank the member for taking the time to recognize Major William Halton on this day, and specifically on the day of his death, I suppose. Durham has a similar proud history, and it's a compliment that the member here, whose grandfather served here as Premier for a while—that we have a proud history as well. All of us should take that opportunity to celebrate, as we did earlier today, the important things that happen in our ridings.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Have we used it all up? Further debate.

We'll come back to the member for Halton, who has two minutes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to thank my colleagues, the member for Trinity-Spadina, the member for Oakville, the members for Burlington, Parkdale-High Park,

Wellington–Halton Hills and Durham for their kind remarks regarding William Halton.

I think it was obvious that a lot of people made comments that William Halton was not someone who anyone knew. I think that's the very point. You know, York was named after the Duke of York. He was the Duke of York by accident of birth. It's not something that he earned. York was named after him, as were many other places around the world. Not so with William Halton. William Halton earned his reputation. He earned the recognition of having a place such as Halton named after him. When people who were dealing with William Halton faced him, asked him to do something, expected him to do something, they found that it was done. It was done well, it was done on time, and it was done in a manner and in a fashion which they expected it to be done. They respected him for that. They respected his compassion. They respected his hard work. They respected his integrity. They respected the commitment that he made. Even though he was no longer in the province of Ontario, the province of Upper Canada, he continued that work. He earned his title. He earned the right to have a county in Ontario named after him, unlike many of the other counties—all good people, all good things, but this is one county that was named after a private secretary, a private secretary who committed himself and made it work so that he was recognized, and that makes it a little different. That makes it a forerunner of what Ontario is really all about. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

1620

HEALTH STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (HEALTHY
DECISIONS MADE EASY), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ
(DÉCISIONS SANTÉ SIMPLIFIÉES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will deal first with ballot item number 70, standing in the name of Ms. Gélinas.

Ms. Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 149—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I can't entertain a point of order—An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to improve the health of Ontarians.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried. Which committee should the bill go to?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member would like to order it to Legislative Assembly.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. Legislative Assembly—it's done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Which committee would you like the bill to go to?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're going to put it to a vote. Is it the pleasure of the House that the bill be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee? Agreed? Agreed.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY
HELP AGENCIES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AGENCES DE PLACEMENT
TEMPORAIRE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We'll deal with the next one. Mr. Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to temporary help agencies.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member from Mississauga—Erindale.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga—Erindale is asking to send the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON
DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR
DU MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We'll deal with the third one now. Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Halton?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Social policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Halton is seeking to send the bill to the social policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Citizenship on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I would just like to take a moment to recognize Rosemary Sadlier for the Ontario Black History Society, on behalf of the government of Ontario. Welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again, we're very pleased to recognize the presence of Rosemary Sadlier. Thank you, and welcome.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING
GOVERNMENT ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT
ET L'AMÉLIORATION
DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Milloy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me in my capacity as Minister of Government Services to lead off the debate today. I'd like to begin by informing members that I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the hard-working member from Etobicoke North.

It's an interesting position I find myself in as Minister of Government Services, because I have carriage of this bill, but in effect, this bill deals with a number of ministries. As we get into debate and discussion, potentially and hopefully, at committee, I'm sure we're going to be looking for the expertise of a number of ministers or parliamentary assistants and others with background in a variety of fields.

This bill is the bringing together of a number of initiatives, of matters which themselves could be independent pieces of legislation. Unfortunately—and I say this maybe a little bit more as House leader than as government services minister—we have not seen a great deal of progress in moving legislation through this House. There have been some bright spots, and I thank members for when we have been able to come together to move things through. But there has been a certain slowness, a certain stickiness, if I can use that term, in moving forward on items—surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, items on which there is a consensus within the Legislature. We've seen a number of occasions, and I've even remarked to the press, where we've had 19 hours of debate on a matter which every party then has voted for as it's moved on to committee or, at the end of the process, third reading, despite the fact that even under the

standing orders, it's thought that about six or six and a half hours would be the usual debate time.

What we've done—and I'm going to be very honest, very candid, with members of the Legislature—is we have brought together five initiatives which, as I say, could have themselves been stand-alone pieces of legislation. We've brought it together in one bill to facilitate the passage through the Legislature. Although I don't want to presume what the other parties will say, I find that all of these are matters where I think there is consensus here in the Legislature. I would also argue that they're non-controversial and, in fact, reflect good public policy.

So I'm not going to spend a lot of time this afternoon. As I said, I'm looking forward to passing the baton to my parliamentary assistant. But I do want to spend a few moments outlining for members of the Legislature what these five components are.

First, the act proposes to amend the Courts of Justice Act. The proposed amendments would help same-sex couples and other couples who were married in Ontario but are not residents of Canada to obtain a divorce in our province if they are not able to get a divorce in their home jurisdiction. These changes would allow Ontario to effectively implement the new federal Civil Marriage Act. What's more, these changes would also help to uphold personal rights and freedoms for non-residents in Ontario.

The second piece of the proposed act would provide greater certainty to pension members and plans. The Pension Benefits Act would be amended to clarify spousal entitlements to pre- and post-retirement death benefits. It would also make changes to help people impacted by split pensions and asset transfers. These changes are a prudent and necessary step for pension members and plans here in Ontario.

The third piece of the proposed act would help strengthen the partnership with the Ontario Medical Association. The act proposes to amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act to prevent legal action against representatives of the association for acts done in good faith during negotiations with the government. Individuals in this organization represent the diverse interests of Ontario's medical profession. These changes would better support representatives of the Ontario Medical Association, representatives who play a key role in the delivery of health care services in the province.

The fourth component of the act would amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act. If passed, the amendments would allow the government to collect more meaningful information about post-secondary students' enrolment and transfer activities. Our goal is to better inform decision-making in our post-secondary sector, and these changes would benefit students and, ultimately, our economy.

The fifth and final piece of the proposed bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act. If passed, these changes would improve the safety and reliability of stretcher transportation services in Ontario. These amendments

respond to the provincial Ombudsman's recommendation to regulate the stretcher transportation services industry and would ensure greater accountability for stretcher transportation services. It would protect passengers and provide greater peace of mind for Ontarians who need these services.

1630

The proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act will support Ontario's post-secondary, health care, justice, pension and transportation legislation. As you heard, Mr. Speaker, these are important amendments. In some cases, it's a response, as I just mentioned, to the Ombudsman; in other cases, public policy issues; the issue around marriage, an anomaly that has arisen due to changes at the federal level. These I would not in any way view as being controversial. As I say, I will allow the other parties and members to speak for themselves, but I don't think there's great opposition to this.

I guess my plea—to go back to my original point—is that we've bundled them together; we've tried to make it as acceptable a bill as possible. I'm hoping that we can work our way through this legislation in the normal course: a number of hours of second reading, some committee review, and come back and demonstrate to people—particularly the stakeholders; as I say, many of these are of a technical nature, but there are stakeholders who find a great deal of importance in these amendments that we're bringing forward—the fact that we can make this Legislature work. So again, I look forward to passing the floor to my parliamentary assistant, but that's a quick overview of what we're doing here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to, first of all, salute Minister Milloy and our colleagues at the Ministry of Government Services, who have done a great deal of work putting together, collating, a lot of legislation that we'd like to move forward. I would, of course, now like to thank not only my minister, but as I say, colleagues and proceed with some of the details.

Tel que l'a mentionné le ministre Milloy, le projet de loi comprend cinq composants. Ces composants englobent des modifications à des mesures législatives existantes et veindront améliorer l'efficacité et la réactivité pour les Ontariens.

Proposed amendments to Ontario's Courts of Justice Act would better respond to families and better support personal rights and freedoms for all Ontarians. These amendments would change our legislation to effectively support couples who meet requirements under the federal Civil Marriage Act, which governs divorce proceedings for non-residents of Canada. Last summer the federal government amended this legislation. They eliminated the one-year residency requirement for non-resident spouses who married in Canada but whose home jurisdiction does not recognize their marriage. This new law provides for a new kind of divorce for spouses who reside outside of Canada, and our proposed amendments, of course, support this particular change.

Les modifications à la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires de l'Ontario permettront l'élaboration de nouvelles règles, de procédures et de nouveaux formulaires pour ce nouveau type de divorce. Des modifications complémentaires donneraient aux tribunaux unifiés de la famille de l'Ontario l'autorité d'autoriser ces divorces. Ces tribunaux existent dans 40 % des installations des tribunaux partout dans la province. Pour améliorer l'efficacité, ce projet de loi permettrait à l'avenir l'ajout par réglementation de toutes nouvelles mesures législatives fédérales en matière de droits de la famille.

Proposed amendments to the Pension Benefits Act would provide greater certainty to pension members and their plans. If passed, the Pension Benefits Act would be amended to clarify spousal entitlements to pre- and post-retirement death benefits. This means providing spousal pre-retirement death entitlements to the spouse, married or common law, who was living with the plan member at the time of death. We are also proposing to amend the post-retirement death benefit provision.

Dans ces cas, les prestations consécutives au décès seraient payables au conjoint survivant qui demeurerait avec la personne décédée le jour où la pension était due. Si cette modification est adoptée, elle réinstaurerait le droit du conjoint à la charge de ces prestations.

Proposed amendments to the Pension Benefits Act would also help people impacted by split pensions and asset transfers.

For a moment, departing from my text, which I'm sure my colleagues in the press will be checking against delivery, I would, Mr. Day, with your permission and yours, Speaker, like to recognize now the presence in the government gallery of Shafiq Qaadri, Jr., my 12-year-old son. Welcome, sir.

As a result of government divestments, some employees in Ontario receive one pension from their former employer and one from their new employer. In some cases, benefits from these split pensions may be less than if they were combined. As committed to in our 2013 budget, we implemented changes that allow certain plans to provide eligible people the option to consolidate their benefits. Our proposed amendments would give these people until July 1, 2016, to consolidate their benefits.

Étant donné la restructuration de l'organisation, certains employés occupent de nouveaux emplois et deviennent participants à de nouveaux régimes de retraite. Le règlement concernant le transfert définit une ensemble de règles pour le transfert de l'actif du régime de pension ancien au nouveau régime.

Proposed amendments to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act would better support representatives of the Ontario Medical Association, of which I number also. Proposed amendments would prevent legal action against representatives of the association for acts done in good faith related to physician agreements and payments—and these are doctors, so the acts are, generally speaking, always done in good faith. This responds to the needs of representatives of this organization during negotiations with the government, and it would help to strengthen partnerships with this association.

Proposed amendments also included here alter some aspects of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, which would ensure that we continue to provide students with affordable, world-class post-secondary education that equips them with skills they need to succeed.

Nos modifications proposées permettraient au ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités de recueillir et d'utiliser des données concernant les inscriptions, les activités de transfert et les résultats en matière d'éducation. Cette mesure aidera le gouvernement à mieux comprendre les tendances en matière d'éducation postsecondaire et de formation. Si elle est adoptée, elle permettra d'apporter des améliorations au système d'éducation postsecondaire et aidera le gouvernement à cerner les facteurs qui influencent sur le rendement des étudiants et leur transition vers le marché du travail.

La protection des renseignements personnels et de la vie privée est un engagement que nous prenons au sérieux. C'est pourquoi le gouvernement a consulté le Bureau du commissaire à l'information et à la protection de la vie privée au cours de l'élaboration des modifications proposées. Ainsi, nous veillerons à la protection de la vie privée des gens.

Si adopté, ce projet de loi aidera la province à mieux surveiller et à évaluer la qualité des programmes offerts par nos collèges et universités.

Proposed amendments to the Highway Traffic Act would regulate the stretcher transportation services industry with new requirements. The new legislation would require operators to meet specific requirements for vehicle inspection and maintenance, equipment, drivers and attendants. These changes would also authorize the inspection of vehicles and related business premises, and ensure greater accountability for stretcher transportation service providers. If passed, passengers who require a stretcher but do not require medical care during their trip will be assured of enhanced safety, reliability and greater peace of mind.

Le projet de loi proposé, soit la Loi sur le renforcement et l'amélioration de la gestion publique, viendra renforcer les mesures législatives concernant l'éducation postsecondaire, les soins de santé, la justice, les pensions de retraite et le transport. Ce projet de loi fait partie du plan économique du gouvernement de l'Ontario, qui vise à investir dans la population, à bâtir de l'infrastructure moderne et à favoriser un climat d'affaires dynamique et novateur.

With these particular itemizations—a lengthy list, I know—touching on a broad range of legislation, I invite the entire House to please join us as we in the Ministry of Government Services strive to modernize some of the services offered by the government of Ontario, in the continued service of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1640

Mr. Gilles Bisson: J'accuse le député. I accuse him.

I just want to say to my good friend, who happens to be in the Tory benches today but we know he's on that side of the House, that I heard him at the beginning talk about how everybody is holding everything up in this Legislature, and the terrible snail's pace at which things are going. The reality is that New Democrats have come to this Legislature and have dealt with every bill issue by issue. If there's an issue where there has to be public scrutiny—well, there's always public scrutiny, but if it's a bill where members have something they need to say because they are representing their critic's portfolio or their constituency, of course we're going to have the debate, and we're going to put those issues through the process.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's what the Liberals used to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I remember Liberals doing that, as my good friend Mr. Marchese has just said.

When it comes to committee, we have always believed, as New Democrats—and this is not a surprise to anybody in this Legislature—that bills should always be vetted through committee. It may be in the end that nobody wants to present—and God bless; that's the choice of the public—but at the end of the day, the public has to have the right to say, "I feel strongly about this bill," one way or another, "and I would like to be able to say a few things about it and make my points."

New Democrats are following the process, and that's what we've always done: to understand that it's all about the people back home. It's about the people in our constituencies, the people of Ontario, who have the right to know what's going on in this Legislature, who expect the members on all sides of the House—and the opposition has a specific role when it comes to what happens in this House—to put on the record those issues, either pro or against the particular bill, and to have their say on committee, to make sure the public has a right to speak. Because, my friends, this Legislature is about what? It's not about you and I. It's not about Mr. Milloy, Mr. Bisson or Mr. Wilson as House leaders. It's about the people of Ontario, and we as New Democrats believe it's important to make sure the public has their say, to make sure there is transparency so that in the end, people know what's going on in this Legislature and we always do what's right for the people of Ontario.

Now, je ne t'accuse plus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to get up and talk about the proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act, to improve efficiency and responsiveness in core areas that matter to Ontarians. This is a unique act covering many different aspects of daily living and what's important to Ontarians. There's the Courts of Justice Act changes, Pension Benefits Act changes, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, as well as amendments to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act.

But there's one piece I'd like to talk about, because as the member from the third party just said, a number of

these things do impact everyday lives of Ontarians, and the amendment to the Highway Traffic Act is one that I can relate to on a very personal level. That's the one to improve the safety and reliability of non-ambulance transport services in Ontario.

The legislation here will help ensure that those services meet the people of Ontario's expectations for safety and quality. This is really about when someone needs to be transported safely by qualified personnel but not necessarily in an ambulance. These vehicles often look like ambulances—in fact, they may be former ambulance vehicles—but they are not ambulances and they are not staffed by hospital personnel. But they play a very important role, as they are doing for my husband right now, who is very ill, being cared for at home, but does have to be transported for hospital appointments on a stretcher. He cannot transfer into a car himself. So we use this service at home, and I'm very happy to see more clarity around this so that people know what these vehicles are and what they are not. These are private companies, it's a private business, and I'm very pleased to see stronger rules around how this particular business is governed.

So that's my personal story, and I'm very pleased to support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the minister's opening remarks on the Ministry of Government Services changes in Bill 151.

First, I want to say this: I'm very surprised—in fact, I'm shocked—at how little respect is paid to this particular bill. It's an omnibus bill by any description, and this is quite remarkable. On a Thursday afternoon, which is usually dedicated to private members' business, here's a bill. An Act to amend various Acts. In fact, there are five of them, and these aren't simple little kind of reference amendments; these are very, very significant.

Under schedule 1 is the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Courts of Justice Act on civil marriages etc. I don't have much problem with that particular section.

Under schedule 2, Ministry of Finance, the Pension Benefits Act, there are significant remarks that I will be making this afternoon that are relevant to a current case before the courts of Ontario.

Section 3, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, with respect to the Ontario Medical Association and employees and agents: There are provisions within that, as well as schedule 4, which is the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'm looking forward to our member from Barrie, who will be doing our party's official lead on it.

More troubling in all of this is the Ministry of Transportation provisions.

These acts, each one of those schedules, is described in some detail in the preamble of the bill, amending the sections within those acts themselves. This is no small piece of legislation that should be brushed off so casually

by the minister, as well as his parliamentary assistant, who was given notes to read that I'm sure he read fairly accurately.

But I would say this: That is discouraging. When you look at the province of Ontario and the chaotic basket of items that we have before us that have been remarked on by the auditor, by other select committees that are standing on issues—Ornge, the gas plants—this is disrespectful to the process of this Legislature itself.

I have more to say this afternoon on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's time for one last question or comment.

One of the government members has the opportunity to respond.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: At the outset, as the tradition is, I will thank my minister, the Minister of Government Services, Mr. Milloy, and my honourable colleague from Timmins—James Bay. I appreciated how he quoted « J'accuse ...! » from Émile Zola. I'd simply reply with a changed quotation from Louis XIV: « L'État, c'est nous, en fait. » In any case, I'd thank Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Consumer Services, and the MPP for Durham, although I thank him under slight duress. I'm a little bit perplexed. When we pass what you may term ceremonial legislation, you call it too insubstantive; it's not meaty enough. When we give you large pieces of legislation, you say it's too complex.

I would simply invite you to not follow Tory tradition, to actually read the legislation and see how the various issues it intersects, whether it's the Courts of Justice Act, Pension Benefits Act, Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act or improvements to the Highway Traffic Act—how it impacts, benefits and improves in its, yes, modest way; yes, in its broad-spectrum manner. But actually read the bill before you do this blanket Tory, reflexive, Tea Party, Republican, “We're going to vote against it and call the government on it,” and, you know, blow the place up. I think that kind of mentality and mode of operation is not really called for.

A great deal of thought—I know personally, having attended endless amounts of briefings on all of these issues—has been put into these matters. This is not being brought lightly. There's no conspiracy to be inflicted upon the people of Ontario on a Thursday afternoon. These are thoughtful, measured, broad-spectrum improvements to the way government does business in Ontario. By the way, if I may say, the Ministry of Government Services doesn't do anything small, because size does matter.

With that, Speaker, I would simply encourage all members of this Legislature to support wholeheartedly, forthrightly and immediately Bill 151.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I will be sharing my time with the member from Durham today.

It's an interesting bill to speak on today, to say the least: Bill 151, the Strengthening and Improving Govern-

ment Act. I'm really glad the Liberal Party actually realizes that there is a significant need to strengthen and improve government. It does show a little bit of light, I think, in the sort of dark days Ontario is under with the giant deficit and debt. It's record-breaking, in fact.

However, Speaker, I regret to say that I doubt this bill has all that it's going to take to be able to strengthen and improve government. It's a very small step in that direction. Unfortunately, with its omnibus nature, it really doesn't give all of the credit and all of the improvements the due diligence that they need, I believe.

The bill is examining legislation in several areas. We look at the Ministry of Finance. Clearly, the Ministry of Finance on its own—the largest ministry, money-wise, in this government—is in need of a massive reform—in fact, massive innovation, I'd say.

1650

We can only go back to the taxpayers so much and ask them to fund your mistakes, or to fund new projects, when we know that there's enough money there already. It's just being misused. The revenue of this province has gone up dramatically over the past decade that this party has been in power—yes, a decade. You wouldn't know it by listening to them still blaming governments from 10, 20 years ago.

The bill also talks about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. It addresses some issues there. We know that this ministry needs attention and improvement. The Ministry of Health takes up almost half of the total of the provincial budget—almost half, and growing every year. I'm going to talk a little bit more about that within this address.

The Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities: Clearly, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities isn't moving fast enough, isn't innovative enough, to be able to provide the kind of trained individuals that our marketplace is in demand of right now. So what do we find ourselves with? We find ourselves now, in places like Simcoe county—and, I know, around the province as well—where we have a lack of skilled tradespeople.

To get tradespeople trained in Ontario is not only expensive; it's confusing for them. We actually have to hire people from other countries to come and do some fairly plentiful trades, like millwrights and auto mechanics. Actually, there's a whole bunch of auto mechanics now coming over from Ireland, because they find it difficult to find jobs there, but there are lots of them here. These are jobs that have six-figure salaries attached to them.

We have all these kids who are looking for work and looking for options, and they don't even know—and if they do know, we're not making it easy for them. We have all sorts of people graduating from universities and colleges and they can't find jobs, because the education they've got doesn't match the jobs that are out there. Let's talk about that when we talk about the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Ministry of Transportation: Where do you start with this? It's another massive ministry.

We look around us and we see—and we don't talk about it too much, really, but there is a crumbling infrastructure around us. Friends of mine visited from overseas this summer, and the first thing they noticed—we don't notice it, because it happens slowly. The first thing they noticed was the actual state of our roads.

Drive on a 400-series highway, and if you look at the infrastructure crumbling—I drive that highway every day, and—I mean, that's just one of them. There are plenty of them that need work. We're not seeing the same level of investment to keep our highways and our roadways and all our infrastructure, sewers—our cities don't even have sustainable plans, aren't able to have sustainable plans, to maintain their infrastructure, so they have massive infrastructure deficits that the province isn't doing anything about. They're not giving them any sort of sustainable infrastructure to build around. A bill just on that alone could be the same size as this.

If you really, really want to attack these things, if you really want to solve these problems, you know what? Split them out. Actually deal with the problem instead of putting window dressing on it and creating a nice, pretty bill that says you're strengthening and improving government. At least you're agreeing that you need to strengthen and improve government.

Then we talk about the Attorney General, too. There's a plethora of issues there that could be dealt with.

You know what? The fact is that there's so much more work to be done than is detailed here. But I suppose you can call it a start, if nothing else.

The government has given themselves numerous reasons to strengthen and improve government, I think, so hats off to them for recognizing that, as I mentioned. But what's really lacking, I find, in this bill and generally in this government is the will and courage to actually take substantial action, to be able to fix our province and to make it the place we want it to be.

Instead, they're just putting nameplates on bills that sound nice and sound good but don't accomplish much. There are a million examples of this throughout the last two years I've been here, anyway. Many of them have really great names that I think people can get behind, but when you actually get into the words of the bills, you realize that in fact you were getting nothing or very little, or you were even getting less, in many cases. It's costing money, with no return. The Green Energy Act: a great example of a bill that is starting to bankrupt this province and causing our energy prices to go up, chasing businesses out of our province. Let's start talking about those sorts of things. Let's talk about substantive things that actually make change. This bill, I'm afraid, doesn't go as far to do that as it should.

I want to talk a little bit about each of those ministries that I mentioned earlier:

Finance: The legislation within the Ministry of Finance needs so much updating that it's unreal, Speaker—never mind this quick housekeeping bill. It's almost an embarrassment to put this bill forward as a housekeeping bill when, really, there's an opportunity here to do so

much for our province and actually strengthen and improve government.

For starters, how about an amendment to not shamelessly run a deficit act—how about that? We know the deficit is old news. We know the problem with our deficit and our debt. People's eyes roll back in their heads when you talk about it. The numbers are so dramatically huge that people can't even relate to them.

The deficit in Ontario is around \$10 billion. The Ontario debt is \$262 billion. That means that every person in Ontario, young and old, infants and retirees, all the pages in this room today—that is a \$19,000 burden on each one of their heads, that we put on. That's not fair. That's something that we need to take more seriously, and we need to do it without calling the taxpayers "tools." They're not revenue tools. It's up to us to make sure that we don't use them as tools, to actually make sure that we give them value for their money. They're not getting value for their money. You've got to stop taking their money from them.

Our debt is growing by over \$1.3 million an hour. Just think about that: \$1.3 million an hour. It's another one of those numbers that makes your head spin a little bit. It's enough to hire five doctors or 20 front-line nurses.

In the riding of Barrie, boy, do we need doctors; boy, do we need nurses. We have a great new regional hospital in Barrie, the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre—great bricks and mortar. It would be even better if we had doctors and nurses and custodians who were able to be there to run it. Right now, we don't.

We have a problem in Barrie. We have 30,000 people who don't have a family doctor in the city of Barrie—30,000 people. What if we were dealing with that? What if we actually took that \$1.3 million an hour and hired doctors and nurses and front-line health care professionals with it?

In 2013, debt-servicing payments cost nearly \$11 billion, making it the province's third-largest expenditure after health care and education. If debt-servicing was a ministry, it would be the third-largest ministry. That actually comes in ahead, by a billion dollars, of community and social services. I'm also the critic for community and social services. That's a \$10.1-billion budget. It's costing us \$11 billion to service the debt. Imagine if we didn't have to service that debt anymore. Imagine if we were actually responsible about the money we're spending on behalf of the taxpayers and were able to use that money for front-line health care workers, for community and social services, to make sure people with special needs actually get what they need. Imagine that. Imagine a place where we could do that. And we're just talking about a small portion of what's generating that debt. That alone tells me that we're not doing enough.

This bill certainly doesn't do enough to strengthen and improve government, and it doesn't show the courage and the will to do it either.

Like I said, after health care and education, our debt is the hugest. This government, the McGuinty-Wynne government, has allowed the debt to grow by \$114

billion over the past decade. That's your legacy. That's huge. It's more than all the provinces in Canada combined. When you tell people that, they can't believe it.

I always use this analogy when I talk about a billion dollars, because, again, it's one of those numbers where people's eyes glaze over and roll back in their heads—"Yes, a billion dollars, Rod. It's government. That's what happens." We need to do better, and we can't just say that's what government does with billions of dollars here and there. We tend to get upset about \$1.25 coffees and \$16 orange juices in expenses. But do you know what? Here's what the number, a billion, looks like. A billion minutes ago, the Roman Empire was in full swing. A billion hours ago, we were in the Stone Age. A billion months ago, there were dinosaurs roaming the earth. That's how many a billion is. It just kind of puts it into perspective for people, what we're talking about when we say the word "billion," with a B. It's absolutely massive and it's nothing to sneeze at. It's going to take a long time and it's going to take some hard work to get us out of the hole. The bill doesn't address that. So that's debt and deficit.

1700

Overspending, taxes, the upcoming budget, an amendment—let's talk about another amendment that maybe might have worked. It could work and actually improve and strengthen government. What if we had an amendment called the "stop gouging the taxpayer act"? How about that one for a change? It seems like it might be well served here, actually.

Ontario doesn't have a revenue problem. I mentioned this earlier. We know that we're collecting enough money. We're collecting much more now than we were 10 years ago, a lot more now, folks, than we were collecting 10 years ago. Yet our debt and deficit have ballooned at a record pace over the past 10 years this government has been in power.

It's a spending problem. We hear this over and over again—a spending problem. We can talk about all kinds of ways—into the billions and hundreds of millions of dollars that this government has perpetrated. The worst part is that when we start talking about solutions to this, the first go-to for this government is to actually go to the taxpayer and say, "You know what? We want more. We want more of your money. We want to squeeze your pocket just a little bit more. Don't worry. Trust us. We know what we're doing." You know what? The jig is up. They get it. They know what you're doing with their money: nothing. We got nothing for a \$1.1-billion gas plant; nothing. Not that we got bad value for it, folks; we got zero for it; absolutely zero. I believe we can do better today, tomorrow and next year. We can do better.

This bill does not address that problem in a substantial way. It doesn't show the courage or the will to make it happen.

I kind of dread the upcoming budget. I dread it because I know it's going to be used as a tool. We know that there's the possibility and the potential for an elec-

tion. This government has shown that they have an unabashed will to spend money to influence voters during elections—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, no, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I don't believe that he can use such language implying influencing voters. It borders, from my perspective, on being unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, and I wish to have you rule on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to caution the member for Barrie to ensure that his language is in fact parliamentary and ensure that his comments relate back to the bill.

I return to the member for Barrie, who has the floor.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you. Your caution is well-advised.

I'm concerned about 10 cents more for GTA transit. I'm concerned about going deeper into people's pockets for more without having shown the responsibility with their dollars in the first place. I dread looking at more bureaucrats for less front-line services. Here we've seen front-line services expand and grow like crazy, the actual bureaucracies in between them to buffer this government. We look at some of the things that have been done in the last little while for seniors and diabetic strips and physiotherapy changes that have especially affected seniors in rural areas, areas with lack of transit, or ophthalmology decreases causing, in many cases, really highly ill effects on seniors with sight problems.

The other thing this bill doesn't address that it really ought to, Speaker, is transparency. There should be a whole section in there on government transparency. This is something this government talks a lot about but actually really does very little to address. But you know, honestly, why amendments and legislation at all, really, when just a little while ago the Minister of Finance just ignored them when it was convenient for him anyway? Finance Minister Sousa wrote to the Clerk of the Legislature last week to confirm that he would not be tabling the third quarter Ontario finances by the February 15 deadline as required by the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. If that's all it takes for the minister to not comply with an act on transparency and accountability, I'm not sure if this government has any legitimacy at all when it comes to transparency and accountability. Instead, the minister wrote that he would instead table those numbers along with the 2014 budget. You have to comply with your own laws, especially when you're a lawmaker. I mean, lead from the front—really.

We need to see more. We've seen this government under OPP investigation for email deletions and general public misfeasance. This has got to stop, and this is the kind of thing that a bill like this has the opportunity to address and does not. Again, the theme I have here is will and courage, and it doesn't show either, to do the right thing. Maybe it does show that there's a little bit of a will—I'll give you that, because at least you named it

properly. But it really doesn't go far enough to show that you have the courage to actually make the difficult changes that need to be made.

To talk about lack of transparency, a subject that I'm very familiar with is the Pan Am Games. We have an opportunity to fix, in the future, issues like those that have been happening with the Pan Am Games with transparency, yet we don't see any attempt to do that.

For example, the sunshine list for secretariat salaries with the Pan Am Games were hidden—hidden, really—through three ministries. So if you really wanted to know what the real cost of the games was, you had to dig quite a bit. Lord knows you couldn't actually go and ask the question, because I didn't get an answer for almost two years on that. You know what? It was really easy. You actually had to dig for it, though. People shouldn't have to dig. The opposition shouldn't have to dig that hard to get that simple information.

Also, embedding money across other budgets: For example, the athletes' village was not included in the original \$1.2-billion budget—but always a Pan Am cost. If it's part of the Pan Am games, it needs to be included in the total cost of it, transparent to the Ontario public where their money is going.

The other things that were originally not included until they were actually caught were the \$3.5-million Pan Am trail, \$10 million in the secretariat's budget for paperwork, administration and hospitality—paperwork and partying, I like to call it—and another \$2 million for OSAP breaks for volunteers. I don't know; where I come from, volunteers are volunteers, and you don't pay them. They volunteer out of kindness for their community and caring for their community. Believe me, there are lots of great opportunities for volunteers for the Pan Am Games, and I highly encourage people to get involved and to volunteer.

Another ministry that is addressed through this bill is the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Again, I look at this bill and think, "How do you have one Strengthening and Improving Government Act with all these massive ministries—finance, health care and transportation—and feel that you've done something that can actually get anything done?"

I was given advice early in my career, actually, against multitasking in certain jobs. You don't want a brain surgeon who's a multitasker; you want them focused on the task at hand. What this bill doesn't accomplish is focusing on specific problems and dealing with them in a wholesome way, in an efficacious way. It doesn't do it. Do one thing, do it really well and excel at it. Take your time if you have to, but do the right thing.

You've addressed a housekeeping issue with the medicare act and how legal proceedings are handled with this act, but the real problems within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care are the scandals and bureaucracy. What are you doing about those? What are you doing to address the problems that have happened in the past, whether it's eHealth or Ornge, or even the LHINs? What is going on to address some of this misspending

and some of these layers of bureaucracy where we see immense amounts of waste?

Here's an opportunity for you to have the courage and the will to make that change with this bill that you've missed. You've missed the opportunity that you have.

You failed to oversee Ornge, despite endless spending. We're looking at \$730 million over five years, signing off on questionable for-profit ventures—we know this story—and allowing Ornge to borrow \$300 million. All of these Ornge subsidiaries that all this money went to are bankrupt, too, now, by the way, so not even a good investment. Again, it's getting nothing for your money for the taxpayer.

Here's another opportunity lost: \$2 million in bonuses for staff. Even after Ornge, you defended it. Even after Ornge promised to cancel them. I'm not sure how you give bonuses to people for failing. That still boggles my mind. I'm not quite sure how that happens. Chris Mazza collected \$9.3 million before being terminated as Ornge's CEO during a criminal probe of the air ambulance service's finances. How does that happen? How does someone have that sort of catastrophic failure and walk away with \$10 million of taxpayer money?

1710

To me, it says there has been no oversight. A bill like this—if you really want to strengthen and improve government, you'll address these sorts of things very directly, and in fact you have an opportunity to do it in a very meaningful, easy way. These aren't difficult things to fix. What it does take is for you to admit there was a problem in the first place that is actually indicative of a lack of accountability on this government, on this minister. Where does the buck stop with these things? What real leaders do is they stand up and put their hand up and say, "I'm responsible; the buck stops with me. I'm going to do what I need to do to make it right." Instead, we saw brush-off after brush-off by the minister, blaming other people. This bill had an opportunity to fix that and address those things.

Ornge also had problems with staff shortages and delayed responses to save money, the poorly designed interiors for the helicopters that we heard all about, and questions about reliability. You know what? It makes you wonder how many people's health was affected by this. How many people had negative outcomes because of these problems? It's kind of a frightening thought, how many people might have really, actually physically suffered, how many people's families might have suffered because of Chris Mazza's little kingdom-building and this government's lack of ability to oversee it. After all, that's what we're here for: to oversee and be responsible for the operations of government. We haven't seen much of that.

EHealth—just as bad, right? We're going back a few years. The health and long-term-care minister personally approved a \$406,000 severance package for the outgoing eHealth chief, Greg Reed. He gave out about \$16 million in untendered contracts to consultants. Some made \$3,000 a day and expensed tea and chocolate chip

cookies to taxpayers. Here's another opportunity this bill had to fix that sort of thing. We see these ongoing issues. We're talking about eHealth, several years ago, and we see the same things happening with Ornge and then with Pan Am. You wonder: What does it take for people to wake up and understand that there's a bigger problem here with accountability and transparency and the lack of courage to be able to do the right thing and make decisions and take action effectively?

In 2008—here's an interesting one. EHealth Ontario CEO Sarah Kramer approved \$4.8 million—\$5 million almost—in no-bid contracts in the first four months of the agency's operation, while also spending \$50,000 to refurbish her office and paying consultants \$300 an hour. One consultant earned \$192,000 in just five months.

These are all incredible deficiencies; easy, low-hanging fruit that this bill could have affected within our health care system alone. It really could have been fixed. If we could really fix these problems, if we could really spend the money where it needs to be spent, we'd see so many more health care professionals on the ground where they're needed, more nurse practitioners, more physicians, more nurses, more physiotherapists, more of every type of health care professional on the ground.

Instead, we see manipulation and frittering around the edges of the health care system, and some of them not well thought out. We see some seniors that have some ophthalmological issues that are really, seriously affecting their sight. Some of the changes this government has made—diabetic strips being denied to people, not to mention some of the changes to physiotherapy that are having an extremely negative impact. I know the people in Barrie—you can try to sell those changes to physiotherapy all you want over there, but the fact of the matter is, when I tour my seniors' homes in Barrie, people are very affected in a negative way about this. You can't deny that. You can't tell me that the sky isn't blue, because I see it myself.

The LHINs: Here's something that I think is another piece of low-hanging fruit that a bill like this, if you really want to strengthen and improve government, could have improved. The LHINs represent kind of the ultimate layer of bureaucracy that this government has to protect them from being accountable. How many times have we seen people across the floor point their fingers at the LHINs and blame them, or point their constituents towards the LHINs? Do you know how many of my constituents know what a LHIN is or even what LHIN stands for? How many people in here know what it stands for? Let's ask that question.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Local health integration network.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Very good. It's good that someone over there understands. The interesting thing is that most people don't know what the LHINs are. They don't know what they do, and they don't know the people who run them. So how are they to be accountable? They're not elected. No one knows who they are or how much they're getting paid. Yet this government points to them all the time to blame them for the problems and the things that

are going wrong, yet they're a layer of bureaucracy you created, at a fair cost. They cost \$70 million a year to run, and employ approximately 430 people. If you call that job creation, I guess you've done a good job there, although they don't generate any wealth, and they just serve as a buffer.

Here's a good example of the lack of transparency. The best example is probably the Niagara LHIN. The Niagara LHIN's reports are not released until six weeks after the LHIN members have already made a decision over issues that are being debated. That's not transparent. If you're the Minister of Health, I'm looking at that and thinking, "That's inappropriate," and you're making that call. We don't see any of that sort of accountability from this side.

In 2012, LHINs failed to achieve 77% of the government's health care targets. You made targets; good for you—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Oakville on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd love to give the member opposite all the latitude in the world, but there isn't anything in this bill that has anything to do with LHINs. I would ask that he speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Every speech in debate on a bill is supposed to go back to the bill in terms of the subject of discussion, so the member from Oakville is quite correct about that. I am listening to the member for Barrie, and I would just suggest that he bring his comments back to the sections of the bill that were opened up through Bill 151.

I return to the member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you. I'm speaking to the portion of the bill that actually deals with health and long-term care, and the LHINs, apparently, are part of that, last time I checked.

Here's an opportunity for you to have fixed that. Here's an opportunity for you to have used this bill, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, but you haven't. And you know what? I think it's just a missed opportunity for you. Even the Drummond report recommends that spending should be held at 2.5%, but the annual increase for health is 4.9%. At this rate, the \$47-billion budget will go up to \$62.5 billion by 2017 or 2018. That's a dramatic increase. This bill represents an excellent opportunity to address that massive increase in health care spending, rather than frittering away on the edges like it does. That's my point.

Another piece of this bill that is addressed, another ministry in this bill that is addressed, is the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I know this bill will make changes to some privacy rules that are good. But you know what? Here's another opportunity where they had an opportunity to really, really effectively strengthen and improve government. They missed out again on the opportunity to strengthen and improve government.

Here are some of the immense issues that they could have talked about. Here are some of the immense issues

that they could have had the courage and the will to tackle. Look, our young people aren't finding jobs. We know that. Why aren't they finding jobs? They're not finding jobs because our training, colleges and universities aren't supplying the right kinds of students for the marketplace. There needs to be better communication. There needs to be more happening there to encourage young people—they need more offerings, frankly—to be able to get the jobs that are actually available out there, and we know they're there. I know that in Barrie alone there are 300 to 400 skilled trades jobs available to young people that they don't even know or have the training to apply for. So we have to hire foreign workers to do that. We have the need and the will right here, if the kids only knew and had the opportunity to train properly and it was made easy and affordable for them. Right now, it's not. This bill had an opportunity to address the affordability and ease of getting into programs that would find young people the employment that we know they need.

We should be making amendments to our apprenticeship system, a seriously dated apprenticeship program. Here's a really great opportunity for us to have addressed this in this bill. Talking about ratios, we have an opportunity here. I know this government talks a lot about it; it really does little, again, as I said. Their answer is to create another bureaucracy, the College of Trades—right?—and another new tax, this time targeting tradespeople with astronomical, in some cases, fee increases. That shouldn't be your answer to creating jobs; in fact, by the way, it doesn't create jobs. It scares people away. It does the opposite of what you should be doing. This bill should be encouraging young people to get into the trades. If you're going to strengthen and improve government and its services to the people, one of the basic things you should be doing with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is addressing the fact that we don't have enough young people getting into the trades in Ontario. We're getting beat out by other provinces. We're getting beat out by other states. We're in the world economy; we're not in our own little microcosm here anymore.

1720

I know we have dozens of people who have dozens of stories about family. My own nephew had to go out west to get a job as a plumber—to become a plumber—because of the ratio system that we have here. Other people are leaving the country to do that. It's actually quite a shame, and then we turn around and wonder why we don't have enough people to fill these jobs. It really is shameful, and I don't get why this government thinks it's a good idea to charge people more money and make it more difficult and more bureaucratic for young people to get into the trades. This bill, if it had the courage and will, would have been able to do that and address that.

Your own Minister of Finance predicts that by 2021, there will actually be one million skilled trades vacancies—one million skilled trades vacancies. There are a lot of high-skill, high-tech jobs available in this sector, a lot of them in my own riding, and that's just the

tip of the iceberg. This is where our economy is going. We can't compete with Mexico and lower wages in other places in the world. We need to compete on a different level, with a better product, and again, this is something this bill could have addressed but didn't. It could have strengthened and improved government, and it didn't — just another pretty name.

Youth unemployment: Let's talk about that for a minute. That's really what training, colleges and universities should be doing: improving youth employment. At the end of the day, that's our end goal on this. Youth employment requires attention. Unemployment is getting worse under this government. Ontario lost about 39,000 jobs in December, the most of any province, while the government payroll increased by 13,000 employees; 600,000 Ontarians out of work; 300,000 manufacturing jobs left Ontario for more competitive jurisdictions, as I just mentioned. But the Liberal answer has been to let the taxpayers fund 300,000 new bureaucrats instead, so we're hiring people to work in government and letting the people who are losing their jobs pay for it. It's a little bit backwards, isn't it? Part of the problem is unaffordable energy, red tape and all the things that I've previously mentioned.

This brings me to the other ministry that is addressed by this bill, the Ministry of Transportation, another very large ministry that has lots of opportunity to tackle low-hanging fruit and to actually make a difference and to actually improve and strengthen government, if the bill only showed the courage and the will to be able to do it.

It seems that there are not only weak points with the medical transportation services, as the act attempts to address, but the management of the entire transportation portfolio is a disaster. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Pan Am Games. Here's a great example of how little things could have made a big difference in this bill. We're already looking at the GTA, and it's suffering some of the worst gridlock in North America. Probably, if it is second to anyone, it would be LA. That's pretty sad. It scares people away. I know that a lot of people, even from my riding, don't want to come here, not for any other reason than they don't want to tackle the traffic. Most of us who come from around the province to come here deal with that every day, and it's always more evident when you're away for a while and you come back and see it.

Last spring, I even asked the Minister of Transportation for a plan on the order paper for the Pan Am Games. He promised one by late 2013, but question period revealed that it still wasn't ready in late November. We're almost into March, and there's still no plan 1.5 years out. So there's something broken in this system when we can't even plan for a major event that's coming up in a year or so. We don't even have a plan for it. We can't come up with a plan fast enough, on time—or on budget, by the way, which seems to be the mantra over there.

We've learned that there are several drafts of the plan. We know that there are drafts of the plan for the Pan Am

Games, but they're not being released to us by the government. They're hiding them from the public. So if you want to talk about transparency, you want to talk about accountability, you want to talk about strengthening and improving government, why don't we start there: by actually showing the public what the books are. Show us what your plans are. Show us how you're going to spend our money. What are you afraid of?

This bill had an opportunity to do exactly that: to open it up, to show us all what this government is up to. If you have nothing to hide, then that shouldn't be a problem. There's an opportunity with Bill 151 to address that, and it didn't. It really skimmed over the surface.

The media has also discovered that there's thousands of additional vehicles introduced to the roads to transport the athletes during the Pan Am Games. Lanes may be closed, exacerbating gridlock during the games. This is the kind of poor planning and secrecy that requires legislative amendments to protect us from this government. I'm not sure you want to protect yourselves from yourselves, but it might not be a bad piece of advice. This bill had an opportunity to do that.

Here's another one that hasn't even really shown its true colours yet, but I'm sure it will over the next little while: the air-rail link. Right now it's costing almost twice as much to rush it and have it ready for 2015. This money isn't included in the budget. Diesel, originally \$300 million, now has ballooned to about \$500 million, electrification is another \$440 million, and it's past \$990 million. That's way over the original budget here. We're not even starting to skim the surface on this.

If you have a bill that you want to strengthen and improve government, you need to do more than talk about medical transportation services. You need to tackle these big issues. You know they're there. To actually call it the Strengthening and Improving Government Act—I just don't see it happening. I don't see it being anything more than window dressing when you have all this really low-hanging fruit in just a small portion of the ministry that I've outlined, Speaker—just a very small portion of it. I've given you a few examples of things you can do if you really want to strengthen and improve government.

The one thing that has kind of bothered me since I got here is this ability of the government—maybe other governments have been prone to it in the past, too. Like I said at the beginning of my address, we can do better. What I mean by that is, let's stop naming bills pretty things without any substance to them. Why do you lack the courage to actually make efficient and effective changes? What is it that we're afraid of about the change that can actually make the things that I just mentioned a reality? Why are we so afraid to really address these difficult issues? Is it because it costs money? Is it because it upsets people? What stops you from doing the right thing at the end of the day? What prevents you from doing the wrong thing? This bill does nothing to address any of that.

Before I hand over some of the remaining time to the member from Durham, who's studiously doing his

homework preparing for this, I want to summarize a little bit.

I just think that for this to be called a housekeeping bill may be true, but there's so many housekeeping issues pending, so many issues pending that need individual attention. Each one of these sections that I outlined deserves its own specific piece of attention, and they're not receiving it. You cannot continue to nibble around the edges on these problems. At some point, a government that is willing to lead and to get their hands dirty and to get in there and really turn the wrenches is going to make the real changes that are needed to make a government work. I don't see that happening with this bill. I think it's another bill that is great window dressing—it sounds perfect—but it does nothing for anybody other than just chew around the edges of some serious problems.

We have a province that is not performing anywhere near where it should. We have a 40% increase in ODSP recipients and a 50% increase in OW recipients in the past eight years. Newfoundland and Ontario actually lead the way for welfare recipients in Canada. When did that happen? When did this engine that drove Confederation turn into the trailer? It's a shame.

When you see bills come out like this come out and everyone puffs their chests out across the aisle and say how much they're doing to improve and strengthen government while really doing nothing, it's shameful. You should really take some responsibility and actually do the things you know you need to do. You've been given the advice by Don Drummond. You've been given lots of opportunity and ideas by our party and by the people that you represent.

It's time to act, not time to play cute. It's time to act. Don't be the government that treads water; be the government that actually does the things that you've been elected to do. Get the job done.

You know what? Under this government, there's no bill that can really truly strengthen and improve it at this point, not unless you have courage and will to do that. I don't see that, Speaker. In conclusion, I am very glad that the government finally realizes that it needs to be strengthened and improved, and I would offer them any list of solutions that we provided and a challenge to actually rise up and do the bold things that need to get done to get Ontario back to its old glory again.

1730

With that, I'll pass off my remainder of the time to the member from Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to, first of all, commend the member from Barrie for standing in and dealing with an omnibus bill that allowed him a certain amount of liberty in terms of roaming around the landscape of the province of Ontario in a fiscal sense. I think he did a commendable job of linking his concerns from his constituents in Barrie and area and his experience both here and as a councillor, and what he brings from his experi-

ence in business. He brings a lot to this debate. I think it was substantive, and I would encourage the minister to reflect on some of the comments he made.

Mostly what I heard more clearly, at almost every reference point, was the scandalous waste. This word itself is the subject in pretty well every standing committee of the Legislature, dealing with the onerous waste of money. Imagine when he mentioned, with all due respect, the work done by Frank Klees in the committee on public accounts and the auditor's reports.

Imagine a doctor, having been given the liberties and the respect that doctors deserve—of course, the parliamentary assistant is a doctor, still practising in the province of Ontario. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health is a doctor as well, but a medical officer of health. A doctor—the Hippocratic oath puts me in mind of their commitment to the outcomes of the patient.

I can't imagine what happened to Dr. Chris Mazza. He was a highly regarded emergency room doctor, as I understand it—and it was so little oversight. I don't blame them; it's sort of like having a bowl of candy there. He started nibbling on it and pretty soon ate the whole bowl of candy. It's part of the appetite of entitlement that has crept into the entitlements of my entitlements at the civil-servant Liberal level of their appointments.

We saw it in Ottawa, under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. I don't blame them specifically, but they sort of set the tone. They set the tile of what's permissible. Now, after the horse has left the barn, they've got all these hard and fast rules. It's quite pathetic, but it actually is an admission of guilt on almost all the fronts—not just Ornge, but we talked about eHealth, and we talked about the—the most scandalous one that I deal with every day is the Presto card.

Our auditor and the new auditor have done a marvelous job. The question I raise: Are they paying attention to some of the auditors' reports, whether it's Mr. McCarter or the current Auditor General for the province of Ontario? I think they do commendable work, and that is the context of Bill 151. It's kind of a whitewashing of a bunch of bills that need a lot of attention.

There are five sections in the bill. I should put it in context, because I don't have that much time, but I think the Ministry of the Attorney General—this is, of course, the justice act—"is amended to add proceedings under the Civil Marriage Act (Canada) to the list of proceedings that are within the jurisdiction of the Family Court. The schedule is also amended to permit additional family law proceedings to be added to" Family Court.

Perhaps it's a more efficient use of the courts. For that, I think there's probably some reasonable support, in a reasonable way, to get it at least to committee. It's wrapped into schedule 2, which is what I found very troubling, and I prevailed on my colleague from Barrie to give me a few minutes—perhaps you didn't give me enough; this is the disappointing part, but anyway, we could seek unanimous consent for more time, which I may do.

This section here is: “The provisions of the Pension Benefits Act dealing with joint and survivor pensions and pre-retirement death benefits are amended. The amendments relate to how the definition of ‘spouse’ in subsection 1(1) of the act applies in those provisions for the purpose of determining eligibility for benefits.” It probably sounds fairly simple and administrative, and I think that it’s, again, another section that needs—and I will talk about it.

“Administrators who made payments in specified circumstances before the amendments come into force are granted a discharge. In the case of payments of pre-retirement death benefits, the discharge is granted to administrators who made payments before October 31, 2012. The act is amended to provide that no person has a claim against an administrator who made payments, or against the recipient of the payments, if specified circumstances exist.”

This is in a statute forgiving certain plan administrators—is what that is. I would have to look into more detail on that. It’s technical.

This is another one that has been talked about a lot: “amendments are made to section 80.1 of the Pension Benefits Act in respect of the transfer of assets between pension plans when a business has previously been sold. Currently, section 80.1 of the Pension Benefits Act is to be repealed on July 1, 2015. The schedule changes the repeal date to July 1, 2016.”

In this particular one, I want to put on the record—this is related. I would hope that the Minister of Finance’s assistant—he isn’t in the House at the moment but is probably listening. I would say this is a specific case, and I’m going to refer to it in some technical detail. Recently, I met with my constituents; my constituents worked and they were retirees from General Motors. I think the names of the constituents are important to put on the record as well. They made a presentation to us. I encouraged them to give it to the other members from Durham, which would be Joe Dickson and Tracy MacCharles.

They talked about four things: General Motors financial challenges between 2014 and 2017—so this is about General Motors and its position in Canada. “GMCL continues to underfund the salaried pension fund, dramatically declining a wind-up ratio. Underfunding is a direct product of the changes negotiated by the government of Ontario through fiscal”—this is really treating in a disadvantaged way retirees in a government agreement during the bailout in 2008.

Now, there’s a lot of information here. In 1992—you should get this—the too-big-to-fail provision pertained to GM Canada Ltd. to fund the pension on an ongoing basis. That decision, made by the government in 1992, by the NDP, is commonly known as the too-big-to-fail provision. Between 1992 and 2009, many profitable years could have been resolved. The funding, however—the regulation permitted them not to address the shortage and they did not.

GM’s ability to fund continued. The government contributed—now, this is important—\$4 billion to the

bailout money for the underfunded GM pension plan, \$720 million for the salary plan and the rest to the hourly plan to make these plans whole.

Here’s the key: Rather than putting the money directly into the plan, GM declared this as a prior-year credit balance. This is important. This is a technical thing. I want it on the record. It’s a prior-year credit balance, and it would be used to lower GM’s future pension contributions. This is shameful.

Now, if they didn’t know, then the government is wrong. If they did know, then they treacherously fooled the retirees of General Motors under that provision. The bailout put money right into the bottom line, which was paid out as bonuses to the ongoing executive group, the operating group. Market share declined by 50% between those years, and I would say there are other risks: the repayment of a \$220-million loan related to the Ste-Thérèse plant that’s due in 2017; required payments of \$1.5 billion to the Unifor—that’s the CAW, now Unifor—health care trust over five years starting in 2014; a pending lawsuit potentially totaling \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion with dealers on retired salaries; and no announced product allocation for three Ontario production centres in 2015-16. They could no longer have a present from a company that was employing 20,000 people, all under the watchful eye of the McGuinty-Wynne government.

I want to make a specific reference here on a couple of things. Under the agreement—this is another technical thing for the record. I think the Minister of Finance—I encourage him, because I will be raising these issues more directly with him in question period, on the order paper and through other communications with the minister. Part of that agreement—now, this is the treachery of this, the sad disappointment, and Mr. Dickson is here as well. He’s no part of this. I’m sure he doesn’t know any more about it than I do.

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Here’s the provision: Under that agreement, a single employer plan, called a SEP—those are types of pension funds. It’s a single employer plan. They were always entitled, in the event the company failed, to a Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. So there was a fund, which was paid for by the employers as a kind of a tax on their contribution to the pension into the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, which is run by the province. That pension guarantee fund—do you know what they did? I was part of that agreement in 2008, with the settlement bailout. They disallowed any of the pension people from General Motors to be eligible to the fund, which was in fact their money. They did pretty much the same snowball job on the people working for Nortel. This is a shameful thing.

When they talk about protecting seniors, it’s an absolute shame. I won’t use anything more descriptive than the words I’ve just used, but it is shameful what they’re doing to the retirees of Ontario. It is a mess. The whole pension file, every single pension in Ontario, is unfunded—every single pension. The province owes hundreds of billions of dollars to the pensions. The public sector pensions are not funded.

The auditor's report this year—this is so troubling, and it's so technical that nobody pays attention. It's tragic. This technical bill here has nothing in it. It's changing and forgiving a few plan administrators. It is tragic. Now, in Ontario, they're blaming the federal government because the federal government has realized the CPP was never intended to be income replacement. It was kind of a threshold plan. Who pays the money into that? It's the employer and employee, which is really a payroll tax. Why are they in trouble? Why? Because there are 700,000 people unemployed in the province of Ontario. That means they're not paying into the plan, which is ultimately a pyramid scheme—one person collecting, 10 paying in. It's a big giant pyramid scheme; that's what it is. They don't work anymore. It's unfortunate. I'm disappointed; I'm one of them. That's the significant problem in this province of Ontario.

If they ever start dealing with the pension—Premier Wynne has suggested that she's going to create her own plan. Well, the plans don't work. If she doesn't know that—she called in Paul Martin. Paul Martin reformed the Canada Pension Plan a number of years ago and, respectfully, did a great job. I would suspect that if he's wise, which I think he is, he will tell her that it's an election pipe dream. It's beguiling the people of Ontario by giving them some sense of security when there is nothing but a beguiling communications plan for them to make seniors feel secure, that someone's going to look after us: "Oh, we're going to do everything"—it's shameful, in fact, we have to stoop to those treacherous moves in the face of an election.

Look at the by-election too, just what they did. They tried to buy the people out in the election. It's tragic. They put the money back in Fort Erie Race Track. Then they put the money back into the hospital. They did the same thing with the gas plants. They spent a billion dollars to save a—look, if the people of Ontario allow this to continue, I say, blame yourself; look in the mirror. If you allow these people to run this province for 10 years—we've doubled the debt. The third-highest expenditure in the province of Ontario is interest on the debt, in a time when interest is very low. If it goes up one point, it'll cost another billion a year just to pay for the \$300 billion you've already spent. And if you've spent that much, how come things are so bad?

They never listen to our leader, Tim Hudak. It's tragic. He has a plan; it's called the million-jobs plan. I could say more about that too. The Premier should look at that plan. Do not dismiss the plan—at least it's a plan.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. They've got their own code language about talking about things that aren't even true. Talk about your own plan. You don't have one. You're throwing money whenever an emergency erupts, whether it's the ice storm—get out the chequebook and start giving out money. There's no plan and that's—

Ms. Soo Wong: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Speaker, can the member opposite please stay on the current debate on the bill? His ice storm and million-dollar plan have nothing to do with this bill. I just want to remind the member opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm listening carefully to the member, and, again, would remind all members, as well as the member for Durham, to bring their comments back to the bill.

I return to the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to put out some more information.

Here's what I'm asking the Minister of Finance to look at. It's a reasonable request. Regulation 321/09 took the GM plan out of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. That was a deliberate, constructed disadvantage to a group of people. I challenge them that this should be put back in. I want to find out who made that decision. Phil Howell was head of FSCO I think at the time. This is on the record. It will be also on the order paper next week on behalf of the retirees I represent in my riding.

I also say that the tragedy of this prior-year credit balance—remember that phrase. If they didn't know, then they're incompetent. If they did know, then they stole the money from the retirees. It's that simple.

Ms. Laura Albanese: He can't use that language.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. I will send you the documents, if you wish to read them. I will help you read them if that's the case as well.

I would only say this: This is the physical evidence that I have of a government that says, "I won't raise your taxes"—

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt, again on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: The member opposite is using language that's unparliamentary. They accuse the government of stealing. That's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Durham to please take his seat. We're almost done for the week.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, you are. I apologize for that, but I have to deal with the point of order. I would again caution the member to ensure that his comments are not inflaming other members and that they are within the bounds of the parliamentary rules and the standing orders.

Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's tragic.

Schedule 2 is all about pensions, and there's nothing in it. I'm providing some amendment material for anyone who's listening and paying attention. This would be helpful to people who have been disadvantaged because of government decisions, mostly under Dalton McGuinty and Premier Wynne.

I only say this: that these are the facts and the evidence. I don't say something that I won't defend outside of here. I heard it from retired senior executives. It's pointed out to me that people are experts on pensions,

and I have checked with them and I am quite supportive of them.

I'm asking, under this particular bill, Bill 151, which has a provision under schedule 2 to amend the Pension Benefits Act to remedy the—I'll give you room—the unintentional errors, through ignorance or some other explanation—to remedy, to fix it, and if they want to bring the issue forward, go back to one of the committees they formed called the Wise Persons' Committee that looked at pensions. They've had two pension bills. They have fixed nothing. They're probably reduced entitlements. It's a problem area where she now has an artificial plan. It's in our order paper here, her motion to create a new plan, the Ontario pension plan, and they're not sustainable. By any measure, they're not sustainable. The reason is, the assumptions in all the pensions are wrong. People aren't dying at 82; they're living to 92. They can't retire with freedom 55. That's a pipe dream. They work 20 years and retire for 40. It doesn't work, and in a time when there are no jobs that last and people's employment—when payrolls are down and these taxes on payroll—you have huge problems and you're not dealing with them honestly and fairly, and I challenge that. I leave that on the floor for the minister to address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am the critic for government services, so I will have an opportunity when this comes back to be able to do a lead. I'll see whether or not I have the energy or will have the energy to do a whole hour, but I'll do my best.

I couldn't help myself. When you see the title of Bill 151, and it reads "strengthening and improving government," I thought, what could we do to strengthen and improve government? What jumped in my mind—I say this playfully—is that all we have to do is elect more New Democrats. That, in my mind, would help to improve and strengthen government.

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You see what I'm saying. If you have such a title, you can't help but have one of us—people like me—say, "That's the better way to do it." You send more New Democrats, as we did with the member from Niagara centre, who will be sworn in on Monday. That's the way we grow and that's the way we improve things.

With other elements of the bill—I see these as technical changes, to be sure. I know that they meant to introduce this in a budget bill, which would include everything, and they didn't have an opportunity to do that, so we have it here as an omnibus bill, one that affects five different ministries, as the Minister of Government Services said. And they're largely technical in nature—I think that to be true—but are mostly responding to court judgments that have forced the government to make the necessary changes, and the response to the Ombudsman and his insistence that we make some changes vis-à-vis the Highway Traffic Act. But I will have an opportunity to talk about pensions and respond to the Liberals and Tories when I get my hour. I'm looking forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me say what a great privilege it was to listen to my colleagues the members from Barrie and Durham this afternoon. If you want to talk about pensions, I would recommend to this House, every member: Get the latest copy of the Mercer report. Mercer is one the leading actuarial firms in Canada—I would say in North America and perhaps throughout the world—and they've just recently provided a definitive overview of the state of pensions throughout Canada and, indeed, North America. So I recommend that reading. We all know that there was an article in today's Toronto Star talking about how pensions now are moving above water because of the recent returns that we've had in the marketplace. But I really recommend, for background reading, the Mercer report, and I would think all members would profit from that.

I heard the member from Barrie touch upon a few things. I want to share with this House one of the constant calls I get from constituents in Peterborough riding: It's the 407. You'll recall, back in 1999, that a very valuable asset was valued at \$9 billion. That was a conservative estimate in 1999. And then we have a process like I call "the Walmart man." Do you know the Walmart man you see in the commercials? He starts rolling back the prices. It went from \$9 billion to \$8 billion to \$7 billion to \$6 billion to \$5 billion to \$4 billion. Wham-o; the Walmart man finally sold it off for \$3 billion. You know what? There are two Ontario places in the world: There's one here in Toronto and one in Madrid, Spain, where they enjoy the proceeds from the sale of the 407.

I recommend to the members of this House: Get a briefing from the Ministry of Finance about the forgone revenue that Ontario could have had if we had kept the 407. A conservative estimate—and again I use the word "conservative"—from the Ministry of Finance: \$1 billion every year in revenue to the province of Ontario. If you want to talk about the scam of the 20th century, let's talk about the sale of the 407.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The former speaker talking about the 407 highway—it's amazing how history and the facts associated with history get distorted and changed over time. This member has no relationship; he wasn't here at the time. He drank the Kool-Aid that his party has tried to sell him, and he has no relationship to the facts at all. The highway cost about \$2.75 billion to build. We sold it for \$3.6 billion, I believe, making almost a \$1-billion profit on it. It was a good deal at the time. The consortium that bought the thing has had about a 6% return on their investment. It's a public company. They publish a report. Look at the report. It's on the Internet. Have a look at it. They make about a 6% return on their investment.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, you drank the Kool-Aid; that's the problem with you. Use your head for something other than a hat rack.

They make about a 6% return, which is not up with what normal returns for those kinds of investments should be.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to call a halt to this and ask the members to come to order so that we can continue.

The member for Halton still has the floor.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, am I not finished yet? The week is winding down, you know. We've got five minutes left in the week, so I can understand the member being a little fast and loose with the facts and not really understanding the facts, but to misrepresent the facts is something else entirely.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Halton to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, I withdraw that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's still time for one last question and comment if anyone would like to participate.

The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I shall be very pleased to stand up. Thank you, Speaker.

Once again, I would commend the ministry and the Minister of Government Services for taking it upon ourselves to help move forward the government's agenda on a number of different issues. I appreciate the sort of brush fires that are going on here. It is a very substantive piece of legislation, touching on the Courts of Justice Act, the Pension Benefits Act, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, as well as the Highway Traffic Act.

Ultimately, our aspiration and our hope and hopefully what we're attempting to enshrine here in law is to improve the efficiency and the responsiveness in the core areas that matter to Ontarians: post-secondary, health care, justice, pension and transportation legislation. I think it's a very thoughtful piece of legislation. I can tell you, from the endless briefings that we were exposed to, that were shared with us, that were inflicted upon us, that there are a lot of items, a lot of background material, a lot of heavy lifting that has gone into this piece of legislation, and for that, and many other reasons, it deserves the wholehearted support of this Legislature. So I'd invite you to please support Bill 151.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the opposition members who spoke to the bill now has two minutes to reply.

The member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. It was a distinct pleasure to be able to speak to Bill 151 today. As I mentioned earlier, I think Bill 151 is a lost opportunity. It nibbles around the edges of what's really wrong in this province, and I think it's indicative of all the other bills,

frankly. Almost all of them, without fail, that I've seen introduced by this government, since I've been elected anyway, sound good and do nothing. I think it's indicative of what this government is all about: "Let's sound good. But you know what? We're not going to do anything. Let's just keep the status quo; steady as she goes."

The problem is, the more you think about that, the less innovative you get, the less creative you get, and you sink, and that's what this province has been doing for the past 10 years. You've had 10 years to strengthen and improve government, and now, with an election nibbling at your heels, you want to strengthen and improve government and point back 10 years to issues that were happening before these pages were even born.

You need to start looking at the future and worry less about what has happened in the past, to think about today and not worry so much about what happened back 10, 15, 25 years ago. Let's face it. We're at least four Premiers out since some of the things you guys keep bringing up—enough of it, already. It's actually a joke. People think it's kind of funny that you keep pointing your fingers back. It may have got you elected 10 years ago, but you know what? We're going to be pointing back at you guys in a year from now and talking about the mistakes that you've made.

This bill is a shameful attempt to try to appeal to people on a level that is so superficial that everyone is starting to see through it. They see through all the stuff, all the bills that you've put through, whether it's the Green Energy Act, whether it's the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit—I call it the wealthy homes renovation tax credit. There are a number of examples of bills that have pretty names but no substance, that don't do anything and don't really help the people who need it the most.

If you really care and you have the courage and the will, you'll do what needs to be done.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we adjourn the House, I recognize the member for Etobicoke North on a point of order.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence. I'd like to welcome, on behalf of all the members of the Legislature, being received very ably by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Marcia Brown, who is the program head of Men of Distinction and Ladies on the Rise, who are here from the very great riding of Etobicoke North.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're all very pleased to welcome you to the Ontario Legislature today.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday morning at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	
Vacant	Thornhill	

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Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Jonah Schein
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 24 February 2014

Lundi 24 février 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 February 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 février 2014

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR NIAGARA FALLS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Niagara Falls.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): A certificate of the by-election is addressed to Mrs. Deborah Deller, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

"Dear Mrs. Deller:

"A writ of election dated the 15th day of January, 2014, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Wayne Campbell, returning officer for the electoral district of Niagara Falls, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Niagara Falls in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Kim Craitor, who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Niagara Falls, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Niagara Falls on the 13th day of February, 2014, Wayne Gates has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 21st day of February, 2014, which is now lodged of record in my office."

It is signed:

"Greg Essensa

"Chief Electoral Officer

"Toronto, February 24, 2014."

Mr. Gates was escorted into the House by Ms. Horwath and Mr. Bisson.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Wayne Gates, member-elect for the electoral district of Niagara Falls, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims his right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the honourable member take his seat.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a number of guests here this morning, so bear with me, please: from the township of Bonnechere Valley, Mayor Jennifer Murphy; from the

town of Petawawa, Mayor Bob Sweet, Deputy Mayor Tom Mohns and Councillor James Carmody; from the county of Renfrew, CAO Jim Hutton and his friend Tracy Tuttle; and from the township of Laurentian Valley, Mayor Jack Wilson—who this year celebrates 50 consecutive years of elected office—and his good wife, Evelyn. I think I have them all. They're here at the OGRA/ROMA conference, and they're in the members' east gallery, keeping an eye on the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I believe we have the unanimous consent for all members to be permitted to wear lapel pins in recognition of Heart and Stroke and Cancer Society lobby day at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear the lapel pins. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have some introductions. We are very blessed today to have a number of individuals with us from the Canadian Cancer Society and the Heart and Stroke Foundation in both the public gallery and the members' gallery.

I would like to introduce Michael Perley, who is the executive director for the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco; Tom McAllister, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Ontario; Maggie Fox, Rick Pettit and Navdeep Bains, who are all board members at the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Mark Holland, director of health promotion and public affairs at Heart and Stroke; and Cindy Dunn, vice-president of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Welcome, all.

1040

Mr. Wayne Gates: Speaker, I'd like to welcome my wife, my daughters and grandchildren, my sister and all my friends to the House today.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, page Michael Sadono is head of the pages today. I want to extend congratulations to him and also welcome his father, Andre Sadono.

Hon. David Orazietti: Speaker, I want to just take a moment and congratulate the Brad Jacobs curling team from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, who won gold in Sochi. Thanks, Speaker.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome the mayor of the municipality of Tweed, Jo-Anne Albert, to the Legislature today, along with one of the councillors from Tweed, Jim Flieler. The reeve from Carlow/Mayo township, Bonnie Adams, is here as well. The mayor of Hastings Highlands, Vivian Bloom, is with us as well, and also Cindy Cassidy from the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance. They're all in town for the Ontario Good Roads

Association and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just take this opportunity, as the sports critic, to congratulate all our Canadian athletes for the fine example. I'm over the moon about our hockey teams and curling teams—absolutely fantastic.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege again to rise in the House and introduce the mother of page Emily Anderson, Kye-Young Kwon. She'll be in the public gallery this morning.

In addition, I had the opportunity of enjoying a Chinese New Year on Saturday with the Essex County Chinese Canadian Association. Present in the gallery today is Henry Lau, along with Eric Renaud and Josh Chaifetz.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased welcome in the gallery my son, Jon Bradford, who is a political science student at the University of Waterloo and is here today to see democracy in action.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park today Rob Murphy from Murphy Bus Lines back in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Moi aussi, j'aimerais remercier tous les gens de la Société canadienne du cancer et de la société des maladies du cœur, qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour leur journée.

I wanted to wish everybody who came from the Canadian Cancer Society and the Heart and Stroke Foundation—thank you for your support and thank you for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the House two students from the University of Akron Canadian studies work experience program. They're in the gallery up here to my left. Please join me in welcoming Bradyn Costa and Dylan Fonner as they begin their 10-week placement at the Legislative Assembly, working with the members for Vaughan and Davenport. Welcome to Canada. We're glad you're here with us.

Also today in the Speaker's gallery, we have with us the interns from the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program, who are here to meet with our legislative interns. We're glad you're here. Welcome.

Finally, some of you may have noticed that I have left the beard caucus, and I have joined the competition with the member from Niagara Falls on the moustache caucus.

I have to share with you a tweet I received. I said that the beard was coming off if we won the quad, and someone wrote back and said to me, "Let's be Canadians about it: We scored the double-double."

I know we're all very proud of our Olympians, the staff and coaches and all the parents for the support that they've given. We did a darned good show, and we let the world know that we are not taking second seat to anyone in the world.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know all members will join with me in

congratulating all of our Ontario athletes and our Canadian athletes, quite frankly—all of our Canadian athletes who competed at Sochi Winter Olympic Games. It's been a fantastic few weeks for all of us who have been able to watch as 34 of the 63 Ontario athletes competing in the games reached the podium. But to all of our athletes, thank you for inspiring us and making us proud; and, as the Speaker said, to the coaches and the families for your support; and the communities, quite frankly.

I also want to wish good luck to our Paralympic athletes, who will be competing in Sochi in the coming weeks.

Congratulations again. Félicitations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition on the same point of order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yes, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I want to just say how incredibly proud we are of the extraordinary Canadian athletes, the Ontarians, who made each and every one of us stir with Canadian pride in celebration of the Sochi games.

It was a great experience for me too—and I think Lisa and others might be in the same boat—my first time to watch the Olympics with my daughter. We got up early Sunday morning to watch the hockey together. She got it, at six years old. In her school, they had the medal count for gold, silver and bronze—and what that stirred in her as a proud Canadian and—who knows?—maybe a future athlete—not to raise expectations too high. But as a family, it was a fantastic event. Just like Ontarians watching today, I'm really proud to be part of that experience.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the leader of the third party for the same point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure, on behalf of New Democrats, to also congratulate everyone who was involved in the Olympics at Sochi from Canada: the athletes, of course, and all of their trainers, the coaches, the family members. It takes a village to actually raise a child, and it takes a fantastic country to raise such great athletes. I think we've proven to ourselves and to the world that we're that fantastic country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, as we begin the week, sadly, in Liberal Ontario—the Liberal government's—there are a million people without work.

I recently spoke to a man in Niagara Falls who lost his job at John Deere, part of the 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost. He talked to me about the impact on his ability to pay the mortgage, to pay the bills. Very importantly, first he started out with the impact on his pride as a human being, as a dad, to provide for the family. He did get a

job parking cars for 11 or 12 bucks an hour, but he said, "Can't we do a lot better than this?"

It's because of people like that that I brought forward my plan, the million jobs plan, to create a good million jobs in our province—well-paying, middle-class jobs.

Premier, part of my plan is to lower taxes for all businesses to actually hire in the province again, instead of giving out corporate giveaways to the well connected.

Isn't it time to lower taxes to create jobs and help people like this man in Niagara to get a good job and provide for his family again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I absolutely support the notion and we are working very hard to make sure that we make the right investments in people, the right investments in infrastructure, and that we partner with business, that we create those partnerships that will allow jobs to be created.

What I do not see from the Leader of the Opposition is any way in which driving labour down, driving good jobs out of the province, cutting and slashing across government, and not partnering with business, all of which are pillars of his plan—I do not see how those tactics will create jobs.

We have created more than 440,000 net new jobs since 2009. Employment went up last year. We're going to continue on our plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the Premier mistakes my plan with her own. There's no doubt that the Premier's plan has bankrupted our province. It has cost us 300,000 manufacturing jobs, and you put us deeper and deeper into debt. I think, Premier, if the plan's not working, isn't it time to try something bold, something new, and something that's optimistic and says that Ontario can lead again? That's my plan. That's my Million Jobs Act.

For example, Kellogg's recently announced the closure of their plant in London. You gave Kellogg's a big corporate handout to create a small number of jobs, and in return, we're losing 600 or 700 jobs in London. We don't think that works.

You now have a plan before you—I think you're taking it to cabinet—to do billions more in corporate handouts. You have a question before you of if we should give Chrysler \$700 million or \$1 billion. You've given handouts to Ubisoft and Samsung.

My point of view: Instead of corporate handouts to the well connected, why don't you lower taxes for all businesses in every sector to succeed? That should create jobs and create long-term, middle-class jobs in our province. That's a better way.

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that taxes have been lowered in our jurisdiction and we are competitive. He also knows that the HST, which was a Conservative policy that we implemented, was done expressly for the manufacturing sector,

and the manufacturing sector knows that was an important move.

What the Leader of the Opposition is talking about is walking away from the people who are working in plants in Oshawa, in Oakville, in Brampton, in Woodstock and in Windsor. He's talking about reversing a policy in this province to work with and support the auto sector that has been in place for decades. I do not believe that he has thought through this policy, because to abandon the auto sector and the auto parts sector in Ontario would lose hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I'm standing, I would appreciate the attention given to me by the Minister of the Environment, along with those who want to shout down somebody, so let's cool it.

Final supplementary, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you have created a province of Ontario with higher taxes, unaffordable energy rates, and more and more red tape. That means the only way for a business to open up in Ontario is you have to bribe them with hundreds of millions in taxpayer subsidies. That's basically what it is. I think you should start saying "no" to the corporate extortion that you've got yourself into.

Where are you going to draw the line? I think it is better to lower taxes for all business to succeed, to get affordable hydro in the province of Ontario again, to get the heavy-handed government off their backs so they can succeed.

Now, it's just not me saying that. Your own economist, Don Drummond, said that your corporate welfare policies were not working. He said we should get out of that business, Premier, and I agree. Let's actually create an environment, whether you're in the auto sector, whether you're in agribusiness, whether you're in financial services, whether you're in high-tech—I want to see all rise in the province of Ontario. I want to see them all invest and create jobs. My question is, why don't you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I would say is, why does the Leader of the Opposition not understand that partnering with business and supporting business—and particularly in this case, we are talking about the auto sector. That partnership is decades old. The naïveté associated with the Leader of the Opposition's position is quite stunning.

I go back to 1996-97, when there was \$746 million put into businesses in the province during the Harris years; 1997-98, \$425 million; 1998-99, \$360 million; 1999-2000, \$414 million; 2000-01, \$717 million.

Mr. Speaker, apparently the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues used to understand that it was important, in order for us to compete globally, that we work with business, that we put those supports in place. Apparently he's lost the thread.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, I was there. I was part of cabinet, and what did we do? We

lowered taxes, we had affordable energy rates, we got off the back of business and the results: We created an environment for 1.1 million new jobs in the province of Ontario.

Let me point out your other major economic error that's chasing jobs out of the province. The biggest area of subsidies from the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals is the unaffordable handouts to wind and solar projects. The full tune is some \$46 billion. You thought you would build an industry where everyone could work at a wind farm or at a solar panel factory. We've actually lost jobs. For every short-term job we create, we lose four in the broader economy.

Isn't \$46 billion an awful expensive price tag to actually cause jobs to leave the province of Ontario? Just end that program. I would.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. You tricked me there.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition supports a healthy community. There's nothing more important to our party than the health of our citizens. Health has always been our top priority. Clean energy is helping to replace and has in fact replaced dirty coal. That represents—

Interjection.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —of \$4.4 billion in environmental and health care costs.

Mr. Speaker, we had to build a surplus of energy in this province. We did it by also eliminating dirty coal, and we have built a safer, healthier community as a result of that.

Wind now represents less than 4% of our generation in the province of Ontario. Less than 4% is not the doomsday scenario that that Leader of the Opposition is claiming it is. He's exaggerating, and he's not telling the truth.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to get to the next question.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: One thing I don't know if you've ever noticed is, it seems like these grants hardly ever go to Ontario companies. They're almost always going to international companies. Maybe it's because you want to cut a very expensive ribbon.

For example, the biggest area of subsidy has been Samsung. Samsung, a Korean-based company, has become incredibly rich. You would never give money to a competitor of BlackBerry, right? You would never tell the people of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge that you would give out hundreds of millions of dollars to their big competitor Samsung. But that's precisely what you've done. I don't know how you can reconcile this to taxpayers and say you're taking money out of their

pockets and taking money out of businesses with your higher hydro rates to hand it over to an international competitor.

Clearly, this is a policy that we can't afford. It's costing us jobs, it's biased for people's investments outside the country, and we are hurting our own companies.

Premier, why don't you abandon this misguided expensive policy and support my million jobs plan to put people back to work in our great province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Ministry of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Frankly, I can't believe what I'm hearing, because a lot of the support goes to those great Ontario-based small, medium- and large-sized businesses. Just last Friday, I was in Cambridge, and we provided support through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund for a great Ontario company, Cambridge Towel, and I know the people who are aware of that company understand just how important it is. We continue to support that made-in-Ontario company. Another company, Meridian, which manufactures containers for our agricultural industry right across this country—provided support as well on Friday through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I understand that if the member opposite, if the leader of the official opposition, can't see the importance of those made-in-Ontario investments, it's because his party and he didn't support the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —which together, in the last year and a half, have created and retained more than 24,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: One of the games, Speaker, my daughter learned in school is hot potato. It looks they're playing a bit of hot potato over there. Everybody is trying to answer the question except the Premier.

The reason it's a hot potato is because it's bad economic policy. Your Green Energy Act subsidies don't make any sense. The jury is in, Premier. It's costing us jobs. There is a better way: to stop the subsidies and get affordable hydro for all.

Also, you're forcing this project into communities that don't want them. You're not even enforcing your own rules. For example, in West Lincoln, the Niagara Region Wind Corp. and HAF Wind Energy Project—those projects are in a state of chaos. Five turbines have been built as part of that wind project, but three of them don't even meet your property line setbacks. They're effectively breaking the law. It seems to me, if somebody breaks the law, then you take out the turbines; you make sure you follow laws in the province of Ontario. You'd think that would make some sense.

Here's the bottom line: It costs us jobs, and it divides communities. You're not even enforcing your own laws.

Why don't you get rid of the misguided, outdated policy and support my plan? It will bring good jobs back and help the former John Deere employee work in the province of Ontario and provide for his family.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I just don't understand where the member opposite is coming from with this million-job-loss plan. Quite frankly, we already know that if he gets into power, his party is going to cut 10,000 jobs among education workers and thousands more in the health care sector.

He has already indicated he didn't support the Cisco investment, which is bringing 3,700 jobs to this province. We already know that he didn't support the auto sector in 2009. Frankly, if the party opposite had had their way, we wouldn't have an auto sector.

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland, the member from Huron-Bruce and the member from Simcoe-Grey will come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know these are challenging times across the province, particularly in the Niagara region. I acknowledge that. But that's why I was proud to announce just recently two investments, again through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund: Niagara Piston in Beamsville and Indexable Cutting Tools in Welland. I was at the opening of Original Foods in Dunnville in the Niagara region, as well. More than 100 jobs were created there, importantly, in a community that really needed that help because of previous closures.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Over this winter, the Premier had numerous opportunities to visit Niagara. How would she describe the state of unemployment in that region?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to welcome the new member for Niagara Falls. Welcome to the House.

I did have opportunities to visit Niagara Falls before the by-election was announced and after. I know that there is a lot of work to be done in that community and in other communities across the province, which is why we have a six-point plan, which is why we know that investing in infrastructure—I heard about infrastructure investment and the need for investment in Niagara Falls—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Like maybe a hospital.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —whether it's a hospital or whether it is transit, making sure we have the right GO Transit and the right municipal transit. Those kinds of initiatives and investments are very, very important.

That's why infrastructure investment is very much a pillar of our economic plan.

We will continue to work with Niagara Falls. We will continue to work with communities across the province and make sure those supports are in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What we heard from families was that they're feeling the squeeze, that they're worried about jobs. There were over 100 families that relied on a paycheque from Vertis who are wondering how they're going to pay the bills now that the plant in Fort Erie has closed its doors. Ninety people from Redpath in Niagara Falls are going to see an end to their paycheques in May.

Will the Premier tell those people that she thinks her six-point jobs plan is actually working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I can tell the leader of the third party is that there are situations where companies have made changes, and there have been jobs losses.

There are also situations where jobs are being created. Just on Friday, I believe, the Minister of Children and Youth Services made an announcement in Windsor of an investment in Thomas Canning: \$3 million. There are 40 new jobs in a food processing plant. There are those kinds of investments and the companies that the Minister of Economic Development Trade was talking about; they're Ontario companies. They're small and medium-sized enterprises. They are the kinds of businesses that we know need support in order to be able to invest, in order to be able to expand and create jobs.

That's what we're doing. That's the work that we're doing, and we are seeing those jobs stay and come to Ontario. There's more work to be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For years, the Liberals have insisted that corporate tax giveaways, the HST and private power schemes would bring prosperity to Ontario, and they promised 600,000 new jobs.

Can the Premier produce any evidence whatsoever of those 600,000 jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: More than 400,000 of them have been created since 2009.

I hope that the leader of the third party is supportive, for example, of our wine strategy: \$75 million over five years to make sure that the wine industry in the very region she's talking about is able to continue, that that industry which has grown up over the last 30 years is able to thrive. I didn't hear her endorsement when we made the announcement, but I can tell you that the wine and grape growers were very supportive. They wanted to hear that announcement. They wanted to know that we were going to continue those supports and that investment. I hope the leader of the third party understands that's a critical part of that regional economy and deserves the support of all parties in this House.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier—but I will say I'm glad the Premier had time to read the NDP platform from 2011.

The Premier's no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways and loopholes are not creating jobs, and people are falling further and further behind. Families in Niagara not only see that but they also feel it. They see Ontario's unemployment is above the national average, and Niagara's unemployment is the highest in the entire province.

Is the Premier ready to admit that the status quo simply isn't good enough for the families in Niagara or, in fact, anywhere across Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm never satisfied with the status quo.

In fact, we had a wine strategy in place in 2011, so it's excellent that the leader of the third party put that into her platform.

It would be interesting to know, Mr. Speaker, what the leader of the third party would put into a platform today. We haven't seen support on minimum wage increases. We haven't seen support on retirement security. We haven't seen support for the Fort Erie plan. We haven't seen support for the wine and grape strategy that we've put in place. We haven't seen support for increased investment in transit.

I am very, very impatient, which is why we have been moving on every one of those fronts, and we will continue. We will not rest on the status quo, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier need not worry, Speaker: The NDP has lots of ideas that the Liberals can mine in the future.

Speaker, for families that are feeling the squeeze, though, it's not just that Liberal policies aren't doing the job when it comes to job creation; it's that the government at Queen's Park seems to be going out of their way to make things even worse. That's certainly the story for the residents of Fort Erie, who are fighting to keep jobs alive after the government's short-sighted attempt to kill the slots at racetracks partnership. Is the government willing to reconsider that short-sighted move?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as the leader of the third party knows, the Slots at Racetracks Program was not a transparent program. It was not accountable. It was not a program that could be supported or should, quite frankly, have been supported by any party in this House.

We have put in place a plan that, over the next five years, will allow the industry to restructure. There are contracts that are being agreed on right now. The leader of the third party knows that we have been working with Fort Erie for months, long before there were any questions in this House about the racetrack industry, about the horse racing industry. There was not a question in this House. We were already working with Fort Erie. We have an arrangement, Mr. Speaker. There will be a 2014 season at Fort Erie. What we're looking for is a good, solid five-year plan to make sure that that track is sustainable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, for Niagara region families worried about jobs, the plan they've seen

from this government isn't very impressive at all. Instead of smart tax measures that reward job creators, the Liberals are opening up new tax loopholes and giveaways for companies to ship jobs away. Instead of providing affordable, accountable electricity so businesses can compete, the government blows a billion dollars a year to subsidize cheap electricity exports to the US. Instead of working to protect local jobs, the Liberals went out of their way to kill the slots at racetracks partnership.

Will the Premier agree that the Liberal plan isn't working for communities like Niagara and admit that it's time for real change in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk about some of the major investments that have been made in the region apart from the \$75-million investment in the wine and grape strategy.

Cytec Canada: A grant of \$2 million and a loan of \$8 million was provided from the Strategic Jobs and Investment Fund. That supports a total investment of \$125 million to expand its Niagara Falls facility. That project will create 30 new jobs and retain 105 in Niagara Falls, Mr. Speaker.

Rich Products of Canada, Ltd. in Fort Erie: We announced a \$3.9-million Advanced Manufacturing Investment Strategy loan to Rich Products to support a total investment of \$13 million. It will create five jobs and retain 43 jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that as we make these investments, as we develop these partnerships, there are commitments. There are commitments to retention of jobs; there are commitments to the creation of new jobs. That's the kind of partnership that works for the people of the region and the people of the province.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. Premier, in 1998, Honda opened a new plant in Alliston without a government payoff. But in 2014, Ontario can't compete without massive handouts. Your government spent an estimated \$3 billion a year in corporate subsidies, but nine-figure loot bags won't fix the problems with Ontario's economy: job-killing red tape, sky-high hydro rates, taxes, taxes and more taxes.

1110

Ontario's manufacturing sector has lost 300,000 jobs on your Liberal watch. Trying to subsidize those jobs back would cost taxpayers tens of billions of dollars. Wouldn't it be cheaper to get the province's fundamentals right?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm very proud that Ontario remains the number one destination in all of North America for foreign, direct investment, and 90% of the time

when businesses choose to come here to Ontario they do that without any government support whatsoever. We have a great investment climate. We have a tax rate that is lower than most of the US states. We have a quality of workforce which is second to none, quite frankly. We have a great health care system—many reasons why businesses would choose to come here. That's partly why we've added 25,000 manufacturing jobs since the recession. We've added 12,500 jobs to the auto sector alone—direct jobs.

I know the member opposite doesn't support the auto sector and if she had her way she would eliminate the auto sector from Ontario. We're not prepared to do that. We support it.

These measures are important and we're actually succeeding. It doesn't mean that there's not much more work to do. We're constantly looking at ways to increase those investments and create jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Back to the Premier: You can't spend your way to prosperity. Your government should be creating a level playing field for all businesses. GM and Toyota have both said that it is the most expensive place in the world to build a car. The solution isn't to pay those companies to be your friend; it is to make our economy competitive. Paying out huge incentives while ignoring fundamental problems is like getting a new paint job to fix a broken transmission.

University of Calgary professor Jack Mintz says that Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act is the kick start to Ontario's economy needs. Will you support him?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. Stop stirring it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge, come to order, and the member from Renfrew.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that there are many people in that member's party who support the right-to-work legislation that will gut labour across this province. We're not prepared to do that. Frankly, I believe that the Leader of the Opposition still believes in that principle.

I challenge the member opposite to go down to Windsor and tell the 4,600 people who are working at that Chrysler assembly plant that in two years' time they won't have their jobs if the Conservatives get to power. I challenge that member opposite as well to go to the Ford plant in Oakville and meet with any of her own constituents from Burlington and tell them she did not support the Ontario government's investment in Ford last September, when her federal cousins, the federal PC Party, came forward with Ontario in equal measure to support those jobs, retaining those jobs in the future.

I know she didn't support the Cisco proposal to create 3,700 jobs in this province. I know she doesn't support Chrysler—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Niagara has the highest unemployment in Ontario. For some people it's just a number. I've met those people. I've met with them in the coffee shop, talked with them on the phone, talked with them in the living room, and now I'm standing up here for them at Queen's Park. They're worried about their jobs. They're worried about jobs for their kids and their grandkids. These are real people facing real challenges.

Does the Premier think that her jobs plan is working for the people across Niagara? There are young people across Niagara Falls riding who are wondering—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Oh, I'm sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In fairness to the member and all new members that will be coming, when I say that, you have about 10 seconds to wrap up—just so that you know from here on in.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I welcome the member, and I know that he is an advocate for his community. Our job is to advocate for all of the people across the province and to make sure that region by region and community by community, we put the right conditions in place, which is why we've made those investments in Niagara Falls and in the Niagara region that I spoke about earlier. Whether it's the wine and grape strategy, whether it's manufacturing plants, it needs support in order to be able to compete. Whether it's the investment in the hospital or the support for the racetrack, that will allow those people—many of whom I have met, who need those jobs and need to make sure that there is a strategy.

I hope that the member is able to work with his caucus and to understand that support for those businesses is absolutely critical; that's why we put that in place. And also, Mr. Speaker, support for policies like the minimum wage increase and like retirement security are things that we have to work together on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: There are young people across Niagara Falls riding who are wondering if they'll be able to stay in their hometown, because to stay, they need the kind of good jobs that will let them raise their own families. They want to be able to live, work and raise their families in Niagara. I'm going to stand up for their jobs.

Is the Premier ready to admit the status quo isn't working and it's time for a plan that rewards job creators, cuts small business taxes and gets people in Niagara and across Ontario working again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I also want to congratulate the member opposite for his election win and representing that important riding here in the Legislature.

I'm glad that he mentioned youth specifically, because apart from the fact that just last month—or sorry, in January—the province created 7,800 youth jobs alone for youth between the ages of 15 and 25, the youth unemployment rate is gradually coming down. It is unacceptably high, but that's part of the reason why we've created our youth jobs initiative, a \$295-million investment over two years, which includes, importantly, our youth jobs fund, administered by my colleague behind me, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Just the latest information on that youth employment fund, which are new hires in businesses across the province: As of February 21, 7,934 young people have received placements and jobs because of that program.

HEALTHY LIVING

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Representatives of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and Canadian Cancer Society are joining us in the House today. I met with four of them this morning.

Every seven minutes in Canada, someone dies from heart disease or stroke. Many of these tests are preventable and the risk factors are well understood. Smoking is one of these risks. Kids are especially vulnerable to its harms. There is a bill before the House now, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which would help to protect children from harmful tobacco smoke.

I would like to ask the minister, through you Speaker, how important is it that this proposed legislation be passed swiftly?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Ottawa—Orléans, who is a huge champion of these issues. In fact, it's the McNeely amendment to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that banned power walls. I do welcome and thank the representatives from Heart and Stroke and Canadian Cancer for their life-saving work.

The stark reality is that smoking kills 36 people in Ontario each and every day. That's why it's so important to quickly pass Bill 131. I believe we have all-party support for that. I was pleased that the Leader of the Opposition has written a letter supporting the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, and last week the member from Nickel Belt indicated she'd like to see this bill move quickly.

Unfortunately though, Speaker, Bill 131 is being stalled in this Legislature. We would like to see it moving more quickly and we're calling on all parties to quickly move this bill through the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. Speaker, I'm pleased to see our government is placing such a high priority on protecting kids from tobacco smoke. I hope that the opposition will work with us to send the bill to committee very soon.

1120

But smoking isn't the only risk factor that can lead to heart disease and stroke. Healthy eating is important in

maintaining a healthy heart, and good eating habits start young.

Our government has taken steps and is always looking at other initiatives to keep Ontarians, especially children, healthy.

Can the minister tell us what our government is doing to help ensure our children are eating nutritious foods?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks again to the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults. That's why we created the Healthy Kids Panel and have taken strong action to implement many of its recommendations. We've announced an expansion of the Student Nutrition Program. We've enhanced supports for breastfeeding moms. We've started the Healthy Kids Community Challenge.

Last October, we committed to introducing legislation that would require the posting of calories in large chain restaurants, after consultation with health leaders, the foodservice industry and, above all, parents. I believe this is something all three parties can support. I certainly know that the member from Nickel Belt has advocated menu labelling herself.

As with Bill 131, I'm reaching across the aisle to ask the third party to stop stalling the important bills moving through the House, and then when this bill is introduced, let's get it passed.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. The Green Energy Act has cost this province billions of dollars for energy we don't need at a price we simply can't afford, Premier. The government promised, at the time, 50,000 new jobs in turn for the massive \$4-billion annual subsidies to wind and solar. You stripped away locally based decision-making. The jobs never materialized, but skyrocketing hydro rates have.

The Auditor General went so far as to say that for every job created by the Green Energy Act, four were lost here in Ontario.

Your own Liberal long-term energy plan says that you will subsidize this policy with 42% increases in our hydro rates.

The cause and effect are proven, and it's time to move on from this policy.

Today, we'll have people from rural Ontario here, marching to ask you to listen to them and to stop the Green Energy Act. Will you listen? Will you rip up the Green Energy Act?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will come to order. As I get quiet, I want quiet. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the critic for the question.

I know that there were some anti-wind demonstrators outside the Legislature. They were mothers for no wind, I think—or a similar name. I met with them several months ago, and I certainly appreciate their commitment and their concern.

As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, green energy has replaced dirty coal. Dirty coal was causing \$4.4 billion in health costs and environmental costs.

On the other hand, their position, on the other side, is very confusing. First of all, the Leader of the Opposition said he will cancel wind contracts. Then he said he would not cancel wind contracts. Now that caucus over there is telling constituents that maybe they will cancel wind contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, the thing that's replacing dirty coal is nuclear, gas, hydroelectric; not expensive wind turbines at the expense of freedom in the rural areas of this province.

Your Green Energy Act is bankrupting this province. It is causing us to lose jobs. The World Trade Organization agrees; they say it's a dud. You are the only jurisdiction in all of Canada, the first province, to break international law in the history of our nation.

We haven't even gotten to the environmental and health effects of what's happening to birds, what's happening to turtles and what's happening to humans.

There is no due process for municipalities.

Your Environmental Review Tribunal has become a sham and is disgraceful.

Health Canada and the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy are studying the health effects.

I'm asking the Premier: If she won't scrap the Green Energy Act today, will she at least signal to Ontarians who don't want these wind turbines that they don't have to put up with them and she'll have a moratorium placed across—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham is using this as an opportunity every time, and I'm going to ask him to stop doing that.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Green Energy Act has created over 31,000 jobs in Ontario. Several weeks ago, I met with senior officials from Siemens, and we discussed a number of issues, including job creation. They indicated that their Tillsonburg plant for wind turbines is continuing to create more jobs than originally estimated, probably in the order of 200 jobs. I visited Celestica in Don Valley last week, and they're planning on doing expansion in clean energy.

The jobs are continuing to be created. We haven't compiled them all because they're happening across the province. I hear example after example after example of new jobs being created in clean energy, and we have people coming out of our community colleges who are well-versed in clean energy, and they're going to create cleaner—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the Premier: The construction of the promised new Niagara Falls hospital can be an important source of local jobs, at a time when families in Niagara are facing the highest unemployment rate in the province. What guarantees can this government give to the people and companies in the Niagara region that the construction of the new Niagara Falls hospital will hire local and buy local?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will want to speak to this great project, but I want to just say that we were very pleased to be able to announce \$26 million for a planning grant for the new hospital in Niagara Falls, a firm commitment that we are going ahead with that. We're following through on Dr. Kevin Smith's expert advice.

It was very clear, actually, during the past few weeks that it was not necessarily the position of the NDP to build that hospital. There was a real lack of commitment, and it wasn't clear whether the hospital would be built in Welland or somewhere else, or all the other services would be kept in place and the hospital would be built in Niagara Falls, which would be a particularly irresponsible position.

I'm very, very pleased that we are committed to better health care in Niagara Falls. We're committed to building the hospital, and we're following through on that commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Premier, jobs are the most important issue for families in Niagara. When it comes to building large infrastructure projects, this government should be looking to create as many local jobs and opportunities for workers, engineers, architects and contractors, to shore up the local economy in Niagara.

What is this government doing to make sure that the promised new Niagara Falls hospital construction will provide us much-needed local jobs by hiring locally, stimulating local businesses and purchasing locally made products?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted that we finally have some clarity about where the NDP stands when it comes to the construction of a new hospital in Niagara Falls. I congratulate the new member; he's having an impact already, and I look for further clarity on

NDP positions on, say, minimum wage, coming from the newest member of that caucus.

I am delighted that we have moved forward with the planning grant for the new hospital in the south of Niagara. I know that it will benefit the constituents of the member from Niagara Falls, and members of the whole Niagara region. This is an important step forward to improve the quality of care, and I really do urge the member opposite to vote for Bill 141, which will support local employment.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, as a father, you know how tough it's been balancing work life, looking after your children and working to support your aging parents, or both. That's why I'm proud to support Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act, which seeks to provide Ontarians with three different leaves they can use at times when they are concerned about just being there to support their families.

Having worked as a nurse, I feel strongly about this bill and its intent to ease the stress on the everyday lives of Ontarians. In my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, residents thoroughly support this bill, and I brought 12 petitions to the House on this particular bill. However, it is frustrating to see that all three parties have worked together in committee to improve a bill that is now stalled at third reading debate. We could easily have passed this bill by now, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.
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Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What kind of reaction is the ministry receiving regarding this delay in terms of Bill 21?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Scarborough-Agincourt for her relentless advocacy with regard to Bill 21 to ensure that we have family caregivers provided for in our province.

Speaker, we have heard from sole caregivers and those in the sandwich generation on the importance of this very important bill. We've heard frustration from many stakeholders—they came to watch third reading debate—that this was being bogged down in unnecessary debate in this House. I'm talking about the Canadian Caregiver Coalition, which is composed of the MS Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Parkinson society and the ALS Society. Representatives from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society are in the House urging all members to expedite the debate on this very important bill and to pass this bill into law so that we can give the necessary break that our families deserve for their loving caregivers.

I urge and implore all the members of this House, especially the opposition, to vote in support of that bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I thank the minister for the response. I must admit that there's frustration in terms of hearing the third reading debate. When we started third reading

debate, members of the opposition continued to filibuster and use stalling tactics, veering off on different speaking points and recycling speaking points, rambling on different topics on issues not related to Bill 21.

This bill should have been passed, like many of the legitimate bills that were brought before the House, yet the opposition continues to want to make changes at third reading debate.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain some of the finer points of this bill that we may have missed?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thanks to the member again. Speaker, this bill is first and foremost about compassion—compassion that we owe to our loved ones and, of course, the families, the caregivers who look after them in time of need. Today, I'm asking the opposition to think about the Ontarians who are struggling every day to balance their work and family responsibilities when deciding whether or not to stall this bill any further.

I'm asking the opposition to acknowledge the support of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society and the countless others who have put their support behind this bill—the same bill they are keeping from becoming law.

It is absolutely clear this is not a partisan issue. The content of the bill is not controversial at all. It really speaks to the core values of our society, where we look after our families, we look after each other to make sure that caregivers have the necessary job protection that they need to look after their loved ones. Let's pass this bill into law so that our families have the necessary supports they need at home to look after their loved ones.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, people across Ontario are gathering on the front lawn today to bring yet another message: Your green energy scheme has failed and the rubber is finally hitting the road as electricity bills are skyrocketing for all Ontarians, urban and rural.

No matter which way they spell it, it's a no-win situation. Your government turns its back on proponents when they break the rules, you take municipalities trying to stand up for their constituents to court, you tell government employees who try to do the right thing to stand down, you ignore the facts determined by your own \$1.5-million University of Waterloo health study. And here's the kicker: Your government actually appealed itself when the ERT did the right thing and said "no" to a proponent.

Premier, will you do the right thing, stand up and have the confidence today to personally go out and address the group that is outside, admit to your corrupt mistakes and call for an immediate moratorium?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to comment in the supplementary, but I think the member opposite knows that I have met with folks who have strong opinions about wind energy across this province repeatedly, in community after community.

I know the member opposite doesn't want to talk about the fact that cleaning up the air is at the root of this. I know the member opposite doesn't want to talk about the reality of 31,000 jobs that have been created. But I do think the member opposite should acknowledge that when I came into this office, I said we were going to change the rules about siting energy infrastructure. We've done that. We've done that and we've worked with municipalities—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Renfrew, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, the member from Northumberland and the member from Huron-Bruce, who asked the question, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have made good on that commitment to change the process whereby these pieces of energy infrastructure are sited, and we will continue to work with municipalities on that front.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like the Premier to answer my supplementary. My constituents and others are currently appealing over the 50-storey industrial wind turbines planned on the Oak Ridges moraine. The moraine is ecologically important because it provides clean, safe drinking water to over a quarter of a million people. It's been protected since 2002.

The community has spoken out against these wind turbines; 2,874 people commented on the EBR posting. The Buddhist Association of Canada opposes the project. The Curve Lake First Nation insists that further consultation take place. Many constituents in my riding have travelled to Queen's Park today, yet again, to protest.

Premier, you've turned your back on the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine and your supposed consultation process. Will you immediately call a moratorium on the wind turbines, especially the ones in the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I addressed the issue a little bit earlier. The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition has said he will not cancel existing wind contracts. They're talking about an existing wind contract. What is your policy? Are you going to cancel it? Are you going to expose the province to more liability?

In the group that is outside this Legislature, there are mothers who are concerned about health. I want to repeat the point: By eliminating dirty coal—the health impacts of getting out of dirty coal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, second time, second seat.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —\$4.4 billion in avoided health care and environmental costs; 668 fewer premature deaths per year; 928 fewer hospital admissions per year; 1,100 fewer emergency room visits per year; and 333,000 minor illnesses, such as headaches, coughing and other respiratory symptoms, avoided. That's why we're in renewable energy.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. When this government pulled the slot machines from racetracks across Ontario, the hard-working families that depend on the racing industry felt like they had the carpet ripped out from underneath them. Now, the Premier has been doling out short-term funding when the timing suits them, which, in the case of Fort Erie, happened to just come in time, during the by-election. Families in Fort Erie can't plan a future based on one-year funding. Will the Premier commit today to a long-term partnership with the Fort Erie Race Track that will give families a future that they can look forward to?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite is fully aware that Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen and John Wilkinson formed a panel and worked on a five-year plan in which we are investing \$400 million. So we are putting in place a long-term plan. We want that kind of sustainability.

The snide remark that the timing of the Fort Erie contract deal coincided with the by-election—again, the member opposite knows full well that we were working for months before there was even a by-election called to make sure that every racetrack in this province had the opportunity for a sustainable future. That's the work that we've been doing. We will continue to do that. I made a commitment to put the horse racing industry back on track. We've been doing that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's interesting that the announcement actually came when the Liberals were trailing in the polls.

Any business would tell you that long-term planning is crucial, and since the slots were pulled from the Fort Erie Race Track, families who depend on the track had no way to plan for the future—short-term funding and vague promises of a five-year plan that may one day be released. They had to march in the streets. They had to march here at Queen's Park for months before the Premier would listen.

One-time funding and vague promises are not a plan for the families who live in Fort Erie. Will the Premier reinstate the slots at racetracks partnerships so that horse racing can continue in Fort Erie and sustain over 1,000 jobs locally?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not going to reinstate a plan that was unaccountable, that was not transparent and that was not in the best interest of the

long-term industry. We're not going to do that. We've been working on putting a better plan in place, and that is what we have done: \$400 million over the next five year years.

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The NDP was crying for a season for Fort Erie in 2014. They were screaming from the rooftops that that's what they wanted, when they finally got to the issue, which was long after we had already started working on it. The plan is in place. We are going to continue to work with Fort Erie. The people of Fort Erie who work at the racetrack—I have met with many of them—know that I am committed to making sure we do everything possible. But there will be a business plan, there will be a transparent exchange of dollars as part of that plan, and that is why we are going to continue to work with them.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, in days past, the electricity system in Ontario could be described as a bunch of wires attached to wooden poles, powered by a generator and turned on by the flick of a switch. While I know the electricity system has been modernized with the advent of smart meters and smart grids, to some today, the system appears the same. Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us how these new technologies are changing how we interact and use our electricity system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. Several weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit Barrie and the new IBM state-of-the-art world data centre in Barrie. They are analyzing information from smart meters and other information in order to create a more efficient energy sector. Not only that, this is another example of clean energy creating jobs in Ontario.

In fact, smart meters are modernizing our outdated, inefficient energy system. They help Ontarians conserve energy and save money. Since 2006, conservation and our smart grid have saved our energy system over \$4 billion in avoided costs. Smart meters help us conserve and allow local distribution companies to quickly determine when system issues arise and avoid them as quickly as possible. The home of the smart grid in North America is Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the minister for his response.

I believe my colleagues will agree with me that we need to continue to do more to promote conservation in Ontario. I know this is important to the people in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. I understand that smart meters allow us to control our energy usage during peak times, to help save money and conserve power. I've also heard that, during the recent ice storm, local distribution companies like Toronto Hydro used the smart meter data to assist with restoration efforts.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us if the ministry has any programs to leverage this new smart

grid technology or if there is any way that I can access this information?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There's a lot of excitement in Ontario over smart grid and new technology in the energy sector. A few months ago, in partnership with the MaRS Discovery District, we launched the Energy Apps for Ontario Challenge. This is a challenge for people using their ingenuity and creativity to create new tools that can inform the public. These apps will help Ontario households and businesses manage and better understand their electricity use, so they can make informed decisions and save money. Using the smart grid data, energy apps for Ontario will empower consumers by providing easier access to their own electricity data and allowing them to securely share their data with mobile and Web-based apps. They can get all of the data from their meter and use that to help create apps for themselves—new tools to conserve energy.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, College and Universities. Minister, a critically important part of your mandate is to uphold and enhance the skilled trades in this province. Your exercise of this responsibility is vitally important to all the fine hard-working men and women in the trades today, whether they are compulsory or mandatory trades.

While we practise politics in this place, I know that you would not want the practice of politics to taint the work being done by the Ontario College of Trades. As such, will you commit today to halt any compulsory certification review before the Ontario College of Trades until after the next election?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a political question for somebody who just said we shouldn't be playing politics with the College of Trades.

What I will say is this: We're very proud of the work that we're doing as a government and that the College of Trades is doing to promote the skilled trades across this province.

We have our youth apprenticeship fund, which is doing some great work in our high schools to encourage young people to get into the skilled trades, which is so important. As we work with the federal government, we're working at ways to do even more to encourage young people to take on apprenticeships. We've doubled the number of apprenticeships in this province in the last 10 years. We're proud of that, but there's more work that we have to do.

Building a stable environment for the skilled trades across this province, building an environment where those skilled trade workers themselves have a say in those future decisions, is the direction we're going, as opposed to making those decisions in smoky Albany Club backrooms.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You didn't answer the question, to begin with. One of the greatest powers the

Ontario College of Trades has to change a trade from a voluntary one to a compulsory one. Minister, the ramifications of such a change cannot be exaggerated. Should any trade be changed into a compulsory one, the process needs to be perfect.

I trust the minister can appreciate the politics of a provincial election campaign—no question about it—and I trust the minister can also recognize that, given your party is likely to be supported with hard dollars from the very organizations seeking compulsory certification, the election is no time to do that. I can tell you, Minister, if you compulsorily-certify a trade like carpentry and let these guys do it down there right now, you can cripple the construction industry in the province of Ontario.

So I'll ask you again: Will the minister stand in his place today and commit to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop:—any compulsory certification review, should we go into an election? It's very important, Minister; this is an important question. I don't want you to dance around this. A yes or no would be fine.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Okay. No. Mr. Speaker, the fact is—and the member asked the exact same questions when we were going through the ratio reviews, concerned about process ahead of time, concerned they were going to get it right. They did get it right, because they reduced ratios 20 times more than any other party did over the course of the time that they were in office, including our own. That's a pretty good accomplishment. The process went very well.

Now when they undertake the process for compulsory reviews, they'll do that. But the difference between us and them is that it will not be a political decision. It will not be a political decision made in the backrooms of the Albany Club. It will be a decision made transparently by the College of Trades, by tradespeople themselves, so politicians like yourself, who want to get involved in these decisions, will not have a role to play in those decisions, because they'll get it a lot better than politicians from any parties have got it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Cindy Forster: The Liberals have told Ontarians over and over that they're going to deliver full-day, two-way GO service on all corridors, but they're nowhere near delivering on that commitment.

Families and businesses in the Niagara region have been clear: They need the service. They don't need higher taxes and fees. The people of Niagara Falls riding could see that the Liberals haven't delivered on their promise, and so they chose to elect a strong New Democrat, who will get results for families and small businesses in our area.

The 12 mayors and the regional chair have also issued a joint statement to the province to tell them to get

moving by 2015 on all-day GO service to the Niagara area.

My question to the Premier: When will you listen to the people of Niagara, Welland and St. Catharines and commit to a date for delivering GO service in the Niagara region?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Clearly, the member from Welland has a sense of humour, which is good to know. Half-hour, all-day GO service runs on the Lakeshore line.

We are taking over from the parties opposite, that made no investment in GO, froze the funding, didn't acquire tracks and let the system fall apart and rot. We have made up \$20 billion in transit infrastructure—\$10 billion. The reason we cannot move faster is because when you were over here, you didn't buy any tracks from CN and CP and you didn't invest in anything. So we're making up for 30 years of neglect, Mr. Speaker.

I would invite the member to come down to Hamilton with me in the near future to see a few announcements about the results of those billions of dollars of expenditure. I'll just let you anticipate what that might be, because it wouldn't be happening if you were sitting over here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge on a point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I was listening intently to question period, and I hope I didn't misunderstand what the government was saying. I'm going to reference standing order 23, because they were talking about family caregiver leave that has not been debated at third reading. I remember, very vividly, speaking positively of the bill, family caregiver leave, at third reading. I wonder what's going on in terms of trying to perhaps mislead, but certainly of naming—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, you will withdraw, because you can't say that. So withdraw.

Mr. Rob Leone: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order for the purposes of question period.

There are no further debates. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

ESTIMATES

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All rise, please.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the year ending March 31, 2014, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Dated Toronto, February 21, 2014.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to welcome and introduce four guests who are seated in our gallery today and are either patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis or their caregivers: Michael Jarvis, Larkell Bradley, Laura Lillie and Barbara Barr. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to join PLTC Homes to recognize the extraordinary efforts of the employees of two long-term-care homes in my riding of Huron-Bruce.

This winter has been a tough one across the province but has been especially tough in my riding of Huron-Bruce. The people of the riding suffered through record-setting snowfalls, record low temperatures, power outages, and ferocious winter storms. In these trying circumstances, many businesses closed and roads were understandably closed, causing people to stay home and wait for the storms to pass.

The employees of the Seaforth Manor retirement living and long-term-care centre in Seaforth and the Queensway Retirement Living and Long Term Care centre in Hensall did not stay home. They went to work when others didn't. They stayed for extra shifts when needed, and they went above and beyond to serve the residents of their homes during this tough time.

I had the privilege to meet with the managers of both these homes last week here at Queen's Park. They shared their many stories of the extraordinary efforts of their employees. Employees at both homes truly showed their commitment to their residents, their families and the community as a whole. They worked double or even triple shifts. They did other people's jobs and they reached out to families directly.

I am pleased to be able to rise in the House today to congratulate and thank the employees of both homes for their dedication and hard work. I know that the residents are grateful, their families are grateful and I very much appreciate their selfless, hard-working commitment. On behalf of the people of Huron-Bruce, thank you for all you do.

EMPTY BOWLS CAMPAIGN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I would like to take the opportunity to speak to the House about London's participation in the international Empty Bowls campaign. The campaign has existed in North America for over 20 years and has since spread to over a dozen countries.

Every year, millions of dollars are raised to help end hunger in countries around the world. Guests of these

events enjoy a simple meal of a chef-made soup and bread donated by local restaurants and get to keep their handcrafted bowl, which is made by local potters and volunteers as a poignant reminder of the international hunger crisis and as a reminder of all the empty bowls in the world. It is a collective hands-on project that serves to raise awareness and unites communities and neighbours in a goal to end hunger.

The London Potters Guild held what they call a bowl-a-thon over the past few weeks, encouraging community members to help make scores of these wonderful hand-made bowls. Last Sunday my colleague MPP Sattler and I spent a very enjoyable morning at the Potters Guild headquarters in London in the historic Old East Village, rolling up our sleeves to create clay bowls to contribute to the Empty Bowls fundraiser in March.

The event takes place on Friday, March 7 at the Goodwill centre in London. This year all proceeds will be donated to the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection, which provides a wide variety of services to the London community for individuals living with HIV and AIDS.

I would like to acknowledge the London Potters Guild and the Regional HIV/AIDS Connection for their hard work and commitment to helping alleviate hunger in London.

HEART MONTH

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: February is Heart Month in Canada. Today, more than 90% of Canadians who have a heart attack and more than 80% who have a stroke and make it to a hospital will survive, resulting in 165,000 survivors last year.

The cardiac care program in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood by the Rouge Valley Health System is providing excellent care. However, no one is safe from heart disease or stroke conditions that can be devastating not only to individuals but to entire families. There is so much we can do to protect ourselves and our loved ones. There are currently 1.6 million Canadians living with the effects of heart disease and stroke.

By addressing the key control factors—physical inactivity, poor diet and tobacco use—Ontarians have the power to make health last. Thanks to the generosity of Ontarians and the compassion of volunteers, the Heart and Stroke Foundation is able to continue making a real difference in reducing death and disability from heart disease and stroke. Over 43,000 Heart and Stroke Foundation volunteers are knocking on doors across Ontario raising awareness about life-saving research, patient support and initiatives that continue to reduce the number of Ontarians afflicted with heart disease and stroke every year.

Speaker, we also need to do our part in our ridings by informing our constituents about the importance of healthy living all year round. This is our opportunity to create environments and communities that make healthy choices for all.

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL AUTOSHOW

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I hope you had the opportunity to attend this year's Canadian International AutoShow at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre at some point during these past two weeks. For 41 years, auto dealers like those who belong to the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association have organized this event, bringing people from all over the world to Toronto to showcase some of our province's finest vehicles manufactured right here in Ontario and sold worldwide. The newest attraction this year was the AutoConnect technology, which gave visitors a glimpse into the future of the autonomous vehicle.

With well over 300,000 attendees this year, I would like to congratulate AutoShow president Frank Romeo and the AutoShow staff for hosting another successful event. This event is a time to celebrate Ontario auto industry's great history and promote its success into the future.

I would like to take this time to thank our auto manufacturers and dealers for their great investment in communities across this province, creating well-paying jobs for all types of skill sets. This year's AutoShow reminds us of the necessary changes that must happen in Ontario to support these businesses—by making our energy rates more affordable, reforming our tax rules on major capital investments, ending the red tape runaround, changing our apprenticeship-to-journeyman ratio and, of course, getting rid of the Drive Clean program, as well as reducing our debt and eliminating the deficit so these key job creators can successfully do business within our borders for years to come.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to talk about something that every second resident of Nickel Belt wants to complain about. Everywhere I go in Nickel Belt, I hear people talking about it, and, yes, Speaker, you guessed it, it is the price of gasoline.

Living in the north, we expect to pay a little bit more than southern Ontario, but the reality is that there are huge price differences, and to add insult to injury, there is fluctuation that borders on opportunistic price gouging.

This morning in Sudbury, the price of gas is \$1.32 a litre. You can drive 60 kilometres east to Sturgeon Falls or 40 kilometres west to Naim Centre and there can be as much as 11 cents or 12 cents' difference per litre.

Gasoline is a necessity of life in northern Ontario. The majority of my riding does not have public transit and they feel that their government should be working to deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices.

There are currently five provinces in Canada that have some type of gas regulation and the sky has not fallen. In fact, the jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to the wild price fluctuation, a shrinking of price discrepancy between urban and rural, and overall annual-

ized lower gas prices. This is what Ontarians want. They want their government to listen to the good people of this province and act. A good start would be to mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline.

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SILVERHEARTS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to recognize the Silverhearts Association. Let me tell you a little bit about them. The Silverhearts Association of Oakville is a not-for-profit organization that seeks to raise awareness about specific cancers that take the form of sarcoma.

Saddened by the loss of his mother, Janice Silver, Alexander Silver, together with his good friend Jacqueline Di Filippo, created Silverhearts Association. The intent was to raise awareness of cancer-specific sarcoma and to advance research.

Silverhearts is now comprised of young professionals with a goal to reach out to the leaders of tomorrow to educate, involve and inspire them to make a difference in the future of our health care system in Ontario.

Alexander Silver and Jacqueline Di Filippo hosted the annual gala for 350 young professionals and partnered sponsors. The event raised over \$13,000 that evening for sarcoma research, facilitated through McMaster University health services. An event such as this proves that the Oakville community is as strong as it has ever been.

I want to congratulate Silverhearts, ask them to keep up the good work, and congratulate the Silver family for pulling together at a time of great sadness to try to get some good out of our community for what was obviously a family tragedy for them and to help advance the cause of cancer research in this province.

IDIOPATHIC PULMONARY FIBROSIS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I stand today in honour of Rare Disease Day, which is Friday, February 28. I'd like to take this day as an opportunity to speak about a specific rare disease: idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, or IPF. IPF is a rare lung disease that causes a rapid decline in lung function. Tragically, and like many rare diseases, IPF has a very high mortality rate. Most patients die within two to five years of diagnosis.

But there is hope for patients with IPF. Esbriet has been proven to slow the progression of IPF, and it is the only treatment option available to patients with IPF.

Despite the severity of this disease, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has denied funding of Esbriet. When you have a disease with a life expectancy of only a few years, the reality is that you cannot afford to wait for treatment. It's a tragedy that the government is keeping Esbriet out of reach for many in urgent need of help.

The Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation has launched the Ontario IPF patient watch list to help us MPPs keep track of people in our ridings who are waiting

for treatment, and I encourage all members to visit this website.

I am saddened that despite the severity of this rare disease and the strong evidence of the safety and effectiveness of Esbriet to treat IPF, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is denying funding for this drug. In honour of Rare Disease Day, I call upon the Minister of Health to take this opportunity to provide affordable access to care for IPF patients in Ontario.

STUART HARTNELL

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am honoured to rise in the House today to recognize Chief Warrant Officer Stuart Gordon Hartnell, a resident of York South–Weston who received the Meritorious Service Medal on February 18, 2014, from Governor General David Johnston. The medal goes to people whose specific achievements have brought honour to the Canadian Armed Forces and to Canada.

Chief Warrant Officer Hartnell has served for 28 years in the military, including in the Airborne and special operations. As battle group sergeant-major in Afghanistan from April to November 2010, he was a key player in high-intensity counter-insurgency operations. He was respected throughout the unit as a model for others to emulate. Whether providing advice to the commander or leading soldiers in combat, Chief Warrant Officer Hartnell demonstrated impressive leadership which proved to be critical to the battle group's operational success.

The Meritorious Service Medal (Military Division) recognizes a military deed or activity performed in a highly professional manner according to a very high standard that brings benefit or honour to the Canadian Armed Forces.

These decorations are an important part of the Canadian Honours System, which recognizes excellence and makes me proud to have him as part of our community in York South–Weston. He is a great example of what it means to serve our country, and I would like to thank him for his service and dedication.

LARISA YURKIW

Mr. Bill Walker: Certainly following up on our great achievement at the Olympics, it's my pleasure today to rise in the House to recognize one of the world's fastest skiers and a resident of the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Larisa Yurkiw made us proud when she represented Canada in downhill and super-G in the recent 2014 Olympics. She truly is a champion and a role model in every way.

High off the 2008 FIS Junior World Ski Championships, where she won silver, Larisa faced a horrifying setback after tearing up every piece of connective tissue in her left knee. The injury kept her off the slopes for two years and out of the Vancouver games—what a disappointment. The devastating injury had some thinking

she might never ski again, and also left her off the national team.

But the gutsy 25-year-old Owen Sound native wasn't ready to be counted out. Within a short time, she persevered, and with great personal determination and will, she hit the slopes again winning the qualifiers for the winter games. She also set up Team Larisa and, on her own, recruited sponsors and supporters in her effort to raise \$150,000 that she needed to hire a coach and get herself to Sochi, Russia.

With her steely nerves and go-getter attitude, the young Larisa quickly became a media sensation, inspiring an online campaign with several hundred supporters—I being one of them—who wanted her to be Canada's flag-bearer for the opening ceremonies.

One of the local donors to Team Larisa, Terry Graham of TG Group of Owen Sound, said it best: "In my own life, there was somebody that stood up," he told CTV News. "And when we saw Larisa going through those gauntlet of challenges, it was our opportunity to stand up."

On February 7, Larisa marched with Team Canada.

On Wednesday, she completed a 2.7-kilometre alpine skiing ladies' downhill in one minute and 43 seconds, just two seconds separating her from the gold medal winner. Larisa suggested she was disappointed; however, she is happy celebrating an incredible season and living a dream. It's a dream the world's best and most committed get to enjoy.

Congratulations, Larisa. You are the epitome of someone who pursued their dream against considerable challenges, and inspired a wide spectrum of people along the way. You made us proud, and you are and always will be a champion in my eyes. Thank you, Larisa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to require certain food service premises to display nutritional information / *Projet de loi 162, Loi assujettissant certains lieux de restauration à l'obligation d'afficher des renseignements nutritionnels.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTHY EATING

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to introduce our government's Making Healthier Choices Act, and I am delighted that people from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Diabetes Association are joining us in the visitors' gallery.

Families want the information they need to make healthier choices when they buy ready-to-eat food and beverages. That's why we're introducing legislation, which will, if passed, require restaurant chains, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service establishments with 20 or more locations to post calories for food and beverage items, including alcohol, on their menus.

This proposed legislation fulfills a commitment I made last October, and it takes further action on the commitment our government made to keep Ontarians healthy—the first pillar of our government's action plan for health care.

Improving our children's health is a key part of this commitment. That's why we're stepping up the fight against tobacco use among youth with proposed legislation, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, that I was pleased to bring forward for second reading last week.

Now we're taking another step to improve children's health by tackling the growing problem of childhood obesity. Obesity costs Ontario \$1.6 billion in direct health care costs alone every year, and the costs of not acting will only grow. Indeed, if we don't act, studies tell us that over the next 25 years, up to 70% of today's children will be overweight or obese adults.

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To get the best possible advice on how to achieve better health for our children, we have appointed the Healthy Kids Panel. This expert panel heard from many parents who said their lives are busier than ever, they're eating out more often, and they need more help to make the healthy choice for their kids the easy choice every time.

In fact, a recent Ipsos Reid survey found that 95% of Ontarians support requiring fast-food restaurants to list nutritional information on their menus. This is broad support; this is very strong support. But I know that government cannot do it alone. That's why I committed in October to consult with the food industry, the health sector and, above all, parents on how to best move forward. I want to thank them for the thoughtful advice they provided, and I'm pleased to say we're now moving forward with the proposed legislation that I've introduced today.

It would require the posting of calorie information for standard food and beverage items, as defined in the regulations, including alcohol. It would require food service premises to post a contextual statement that would help educate patrons about their daily caloric requirements. The proposed legislation would also authorize public health inspectors to enforce these requirements.

If this legislation passes—and I sure do hope that it does—Ontario will be the first province in Canada to legislate the posting of calories on menus, which will help people make informed choices when eating out or purchasing take-away meals. I want to ensure that families have easily accessible and transparent nutrition information when they buy prepared food, because I know that when they have this information, they are more likely to make the wiser, healthier choice, and companies that sell food may rethink their menus and recipes in response to the consumer preferences.

Knowledge, as they say, is power. Having nutritional knowledge readily at hand will empower people to take better control of their own health, and I think that's something all members of the House can get behind. Each of us wants to help our kids and grandkids have a healthy start to life. That's why I'm confident that, with this legislation, we can reach across the aisle and find support from members in all three parties.

This legislation is the latest in a series of steps we've already taken to implement recommendations from the Healthy Kids Panel report. Last month, the Premier and I announced the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, in which communities across Ontario are working together to make the children in their communities the healthiest they can be.

We're expanding supports for new moms so that every woman who wants breastfeeding support can get it. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is expanding Ontario's Student Nutrition Program, creating more than 200 new breakfast and morning meal programs for about 33,000 more kids in higher-needs communities. This adds to the almost 700,000 students who benefited from those programs in the past year. And as I mentioned, we recently began second reading debate on the Youth Smoking Prevention Act.

Today, we have the opportunity to take the next step. Working together, we can help parents across the province make the right choices to keep their kids healthy. I urge all members to support this proposed legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise, as the Ontario PC caucus's health critic, to address the Making Healthier Choices Act, tabled by the minister just a few moments ago.

I've not yet seen the full bill and have not had the opportunity to review it in detail, so I can't speak to the specifics of the bill. I can only speak in general terms of what has already been reported in the media.

This past October, as the minister has indicated, at a press conference at a McDonald's restaurant, the minister

announced that her government would be bringing forward legislation to require restaurants to list calories on their menus and reduce advertising to children. What we've seen coming forward today is the response and the follow-through by the minister on that.

I would say that there's no question that we need to deal with the issue of obesity in Ontario. It is becoming a serious problem, particularly for children, and this does have long-term implications for children in the longer term. They can grow up to develop serious health complications, from diabetes to hypertension to stroke and many other medical complications, and of course it is putting an increasing strain on our health care system as well in financial terms. We do need to take urgent action. It has been said that obesity is the new tobacco in the implications on our health care system and the additional costs related to it, but the question is, what do we do?

We have groups visiting us today, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society, who visited many of us as MPPs. They've been talking about making Ontario the healthiest province. Though they were specifically speaking about tobacco control and caregiver assistance, I think it could be equally applicable to dealing with the effects of obesity.

If you were to have a campaign in schools, for example, and teach children about nutrition and healthy eating habits, what we would end up doing is educating young people to have a lifetime of good healthy eating habits in the long term and to learn how to make good choices. I think in the short term also you would influence parental choices, because if children aren't clamouring to go to fast-food restaurants, I think most parents wouldn't be going there as frequently either. I think that could be something that could be really very effective immediately in dealing with the effects of childhood obesity.

What do we end up with? Well, we've got the menu-labelling legislation that's in front of us right now. While I don't want to dismiss it, I know that it is important that we have nutritional information available. The fact of the matter is, we already have a lot of this information available, and ORHMA, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, has indicated that the restaurant industry has already shown leadership. Many already have nutritional information available at their restaurants on tray liners, posters, pamphlets, QR codes and/or nutritional information apps. Many also have nutritional information available on their websites so that their guests can plan ahead before dining out or ordering.

The fact is that most of this information is already out there, Mr. Speaker. Some people have said that this is really a solution in search of a problem, that we're dealing with a situation that's already been dealt with. However, I would say that I look forward to reading the legislation, understanding the pros and cons and understanding what a huge difference this is supposed to make in the lives of Ontarians, particularly children.

There is one other comment, though. There is an indication that the caloric content of alcoholic drinks is

also included in this legislation. Many have indicated that this should not be included. If this is a bill that's aimed at childhood obesity, then presumably alcoholic content isn't necessary to be listed.

I leave it at that. I look forward to reviewing the legislation in detail and will have further comments when this bill comes before us in a formal manner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I was rather excited to hear what the government was going to introduce. I feel a little bit deflated when I read in—I haven't seen the bill either, but what I've seen of the bill is that it will only apply to restaurants and chains that have 20 premises in Ontario. I don't understand this. My bill talks about five locations in Ontario because it would cover all of the restaurants that, as my colleague says, already have this information and just make it available on the menu or the menu board.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I've been working at this issue since 2009. In 2009, I introduced the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act. It was Bill 156 at the time, and on April 9, 2009, it passed second reading. We had a debate in this House. The House voted in favour at second reading that the bill go through. At the time, it asked for restaurants with five premises and \$5 million. Unfortunately, the House prorogued.

So on June 2, 2010, I reintroduced Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating, now called Bill 90. Bill 90 required the disclosure of calories on menus and stayed the same: five premises making gross sales of \$5 million. The Legislature again prorogued.

I reintroduced it on May 8, 2012 with the same title, Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating, now called Bill 86. By that time, during all those years, I worked the file, Mr. Speaker. I talked to the convenience stores, to the grocery stores, to food establishments, to a lot of health care providers and to a lot of families. It had moved from putting the calorie amounts on the menu to putting the calorie amounts and a flag for sodium, because so many Ontarians have high blood pressure that can be directly linked to eating too much sodium—too much salt in their diets, directly linked to restaurant food.

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Yet again, the Legislature prorogued. Not to be outdone, in October 2012, I reintroduced it, and we all know what happened. Mr. McGuinty decided to prorogue two days before I was going to go for second reading—I took that personally, Mr. Speaker, but it probably wasn't—and I couldn't bring it for second reading.

Then, on Thursday of last week, Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy, passed second reading. Healthy Decisions Made Easy talks about menu labelling so that you would see the number of calories next to the price on menu items, whether it be food or drinks, including alcohol drinks. You'd be surprised at how many calories there are in alcohol, until you start to look at those things. If you have four beers, you can't eat for the day. Your caloric intake is through the roof.

But anyway, back to last Thursday and Healthy Decisions Made Easy: We had a debate in the House. It

passed second reading, with five locations and \$5 million. That is because everybody who already has standard portions in recipes—so that you know exactly how many calories there are—already has that information and would be willing to go ahead.

I hope that the government takes this into account. There have been six years of work on the ground to move this idea forward. I must be honest: The first time the bill passed, it only passed by three votes. That was kind of a thin margin. It did pass, but I could see that there was quite a bit of a pushback. Now if you go and ask any group of Ontario citizens, you would come back with 90% support for that idea. In my world, 90% support is very, very hard to achieve. There will always be some naysayers; there will always be some pushback. No matter if you offer paradise, there will be some people who don't want it.

At 90%, we know that we have a really strong base of support. We know that the restaurant industry, the bar industry, the convenience store industry and the grocery store industry are ready.

We have been talking—I have been talking, and the NDP has been talking—about this for six long years. Do I look forward to the day when I will go into a fast food outlet and there will be the calories? Yes. The sooner the better. I can't wait.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank Karen and Paul Brown of Mallorytown for their advocacy on Lyme disease in my riding.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—who is here today—"to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I'm very pleased to sign this in support. I affix my signature. I'll send it to the table with page Jaclyn. Again, I'm glad the minister is here to listen.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: I continue to get signatures from all across the province on this one.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I fully agree, add my signature and give it to page Owen.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of

the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

I will sign it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—York—Simcoe. I was spreading the love.

Mrs. Julia Munro: York—Simcoe. That's right. Thank you very much.

This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Anne.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from B. Thomas Bulldozing. He's on Highway 64 in Alban, in the French River region of my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of

price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Kiranpreet to bring it to the Clerk.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have an important petition that's signed by a great many people from Brampton, Oakville and eastern Mississauga. It's addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and it's entitled "Safer Families Program in Peel Region." It reads as follows:

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"Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children's Aid Society ... receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel community; and

"Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

"Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario's child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

"Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children's Aid Society and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children's Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program."

I completely agree with this petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it, and to send it down with page Samer.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition in support of Bill 137, paved shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's private member's bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 137, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this petition.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I'm going to add my signature to the thousands and thousands of people who are still collecting these and give it to page Anne to be delivered to the table.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300

and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I will give this to page Alessia.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville for giving me this opportunity to put on the record this important petition, which reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent"—the minister is here, so I'm saying this—"Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving" publicly funded "additional ... physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens" with pride;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional" publicly funded "physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students" and people in the middle of their careers, "and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive" publicly funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses," leave their wife and family, "to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide" publicly funded "post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices," which are a shame in the province of Ontario, and the Minister of Health should listen.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here signed by almost everyone in this municipality.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the MPAC (Municipal Property Assessment Corp.) has failed to provide the appropriate rationale for the significant changes (mostly increases) in the assessed values of residential properties in the township of James; and

"Whereas neither physical improvements nor the general condition of the local real estate market warrant these drastic changes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of Finance to engage an independent third party organization to conduct a fair and equitable reassessment of all property values within the township of James immediately."

I fully agree, affix my signature and give it to page Michael.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support this, will sign my name and send it with page Jaclyn.

ASTHMA

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on October 9, 2012, 12-year-old Ryan Gibbons unnecessarily died of an asthma attack at school;

“Whereas one in five students in Ontario schools has asthma; and

“Whereas asthma is a disease that can be controlled; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of Ontario schools to ensure asthma-safe environments;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Education to take measures to protect pupils with asthma by ensuring all school boards put in place asthma-management plans based on province-wide standards.”

I support this bill, and I support Bill 135. I’m sure the Liberal government will work hard to get this passed before the next election.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O’Toole: “Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in” our communities in Ontario; and

“Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise” badly needed “funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across” the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario,” under Dalton McGuinty, “announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

“Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these” volunteer “organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs” in their community,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians.”

This is a very respectable petition, which I support and sign in support of my constituents and send it with Samer to the table.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes the time that we have available today for petitions. Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: I’d like to seek the agreement of the House to revert to motions, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to revert to motions. Agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the order for concurrence in supply for the various ministries and offices, as represented by government orders 11 through 21 inclusive, shall be called concurrently; and that when such orders are called they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate; and two hours shall be allotted to the debate, divided equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries and offices referred to above; and that any required divisions in the orders for concurrence in supply shall be deferred to deferred votes, such votes to be taken in succession, with one five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2014, and ending on September 30, 2014, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2014-15 fiscal year, following the voting of supply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 42. I again look to the government House leader to lead off the discussion.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to begin what is basically a routine matter, which comes before the House every year: the interim supply motion. Just to refresh the memory of members here, as well as those viewers at home, as to what interim supply is, I'll give a brief explanation. If passed, this motion would allow all government ministries and legislative offices to operate from the beginning of the upcoming fiscal year—that is, April 1. This motion is not about introducing new priorities. All expenditures incurred under the authority of this motion would be consistent with the upcoming 2014 budget and 2014-15 estimates, and these expenses would eventually be authorized in the Supply Act for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

While this motion is not about setting out new priorities, it is important. That's because it would give our government the necessary spending authority to finance the programs we have and will set out, including important public services the people of Ontario have come to expect. It would allow us to continue operating, to fulfill our commitments and put our economic plan for creating jobs into practice. It would ensure that we can make important payments to institutions and individuals across Ontario; for example—and these are just a few; there are many more—payments to nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, schools, municipalities, recipients of financial assistance, people with disabilities and special needs, children's aid societies, and those who rely on various benefit programs, such as the Ontario Child Benefit and guaranteed annual income support for seniors. Without this interim supply motion, these important payments could not be made.

I would also like to remind everyone that this motion is for a specified duration. It would provide temporary spending authority which is required at the beginning of the fiscal year and would cover the period from April 1, 2014, through September 30, 2014. This temporary spending authority is necessary to allow the government to operate while the Legislature conducts its review of the government's detailed spending plans through the work of the Standing Committee on Estimates.

As I said, an administrative matter—a very important one, but still one of a routine nature—is before this Legislature. It basically allows the government, if I can

put it in very basic terms, to pay its bills over the coming months. As I think we all recognize—and we can put aside partisan differences—it is important. I gave just a small list. We want to be in a position to flow resources to those who receive them from the government. I gave, as I say, just a short list of those that benefit on a regular basis from this.

Mr. Speaker, there is a period of time that is allotted under the standing orders. We look forward to the debate here this afternoon, but on the government side, I think I basically outlined our position on this matter. As I say, I look forward to the debate and discussion, but I think I've put forward an explanation and obviously our position in support of this important, yet administrative, matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate. You know, it's funny, some of the comments that the government House leader mentioned earlier. He framed this supply motion as administrative, routine. What he forgot to say was that this motion is a motion of confidence. So it's going to be very interesting, when the actual vote comes forward, to see how our friends to our left, who have supported the confidence of this government over the last year and a bit, will be voting on this matter of confidence. I can't wait to hear some of the speakers.

I did want to tell people who are watching that Monday's session is sort of the longest session we have of the day, where we talk about legislation. Originally, up to about 12:30 today, we were planning on debating Bill 141, which is the bill that the government indicated to us on Thursday they would be calling here at 1 o'clock, so at 1 o'clock, we were planning on speaking on Bill 141. At 12:30, they sent us an email and said that we're going to be dealing with this confidence measure. I guess the question that some of you might want to ask at home is: Why would that happen?

Well, there's a conference taking place at the Royal York. It's a conference that has a long-standing tradition not just in Ontario, in the municipal sector, but also in this place, and it's called the Rural Ontario Municipal Association/Ontario Good Roads Association joint conference, affectionately known as the ROMA/OGRA conference. It's one of the largest conferences—certainly the largest conference in the city of Toronto, because the other conference, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario or AMO conference, travels around the province. This is the opportunity that members of the Legislative Assembly have to interact with their municipal councillors.

There's a tradition in this place that normally on a Monday afternoon, at the start of the ROMA/OGRA conference, we would have what I would deem a corporal's guard here in the Legislative Assembly; we would have some agreements on the bills that are going to be debated so that many of us, myself included, who have a number of municipal officials there, would have the opportunity

to speak to them about issues that are of importance. We have ministers who have meetings, parliamentary assistants, our caucus, members of the third party—we all have meetings with our municipal officials. It's been a long-standing tradition in this place that we have very thin ranks in this Legislative Assembly in the afternoon of the first day of the ROMA conference.

It begs the question: Why would the government schedule a motion of confidence on a Monday afternoon? Well, let me tell you: Because the members on this side of the House—we've got the rural members. We've got the members of municipal councils in these rural communities. That's why the government calls this motion today: to prevent us from going to our scheduled meetings, to prevent us from talking to our municipal officials, only to be mean-spirited by changing the channel at the last possible moment to debate this motion. That's the reason.

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The other reason, I suggest, quite frankly, is because this government doesn't have a plan that appeals to the municipalities in this province of Ontario. They've had 11 years to run the province, and they've basically ignored rural Ontario, especially rural Ontario municipalities—because, you know what, Speaker? I'll tell you: One of the first issues that came up this morning was the issue of revenue tools and the issue of the OPP billing reform. Those were issues that came up almost immediately when the bagpipes stopped playing at the Royal York for the start of this conference.

Why would members of the government not want members of the opposition there? Because we've got the story. We've got the concerns. We are the ear of what's going on in rural Ontario. You know what? You just don't like the answer. That's why you're having us stay here this afternoon rather than being able to speak to the—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: So suspicious.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, you know what? You may not like the answer, minister of consumer affairs, but that's the fact. The fact of the matter is, we've always had agreement, we've always had consensus and we've always been able to go to the ROMA conference to talk to our municipalities. You've made that decision to cut us off—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Very funny. This isn't a joking matter; this is a matter of confidence. We have the message.

I asked a question here on Thursday during question period of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. She's the minister whom I'm the critic for. I had a briefing in November with her staff about OPP billing reform. I looked her staff in the face and said, "It's chaos, based on what you've done to municipalities in rural Ontario." You went out and you've essentially told them where their starting point is going to be. You've now told them what the costing formula will be—where you want it to end, but you

didn't tell them how they're going to get there. You ran around for months as a government, telling people who were going to have significant increases, "Don't worry. We're going to look after you in 2015." That's the message that they've given members of the Ontario PC Party. That's what they told the members of the New Democratic Party. But you know what? That's not the same story the minister said here on Thursday. That's not the same story that's being told at the ROMA conference. They're being told, "Oh, this is just a proposed formula. We're still going to listen to you." You've already told the winners how much money they're going to save, and you've already told the losers how much they're going to have to raise taxes in rural Ontario to pay for their policing. So it's no surprise that you want the people who are standing up for rural Ontario not to be where they need to be, and that's telling people where it is and how you people are handling things.

The other issue is arbitration reform. There are a lot of municipal officials down at the Royal York right now who want to talk about arbitration reform. Our House leader, Jim Wilson, tabled a bill and worked with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It wasn't perfect. There were some things that I think AMO wanted to change in committee. Again, it was defeated by the government and the New Democratic Party. It didn't see the light of day. Again, municipal officials are asking why that isn't moving forward.

It's no surprise that they're going to use every trick in the book to try to change the channel, to not debate a bill that they want passed, but to flip it over to supply to test the confidence of the Legislature. That's why they did it.

It's shameful. We've always had this co-operative agreement. We've always been able to have some co-operation when it came to this particular conference. Now the government has thrown that right out the window.

Right now, Speaker, I have to tell you that we heard loud and clear from our constituents over the last several months during the recess from the Legislature. There are nearly a million unemployed men and women in Ontario. That's why, in the fall, when we came back from our summer break, the Ontario PC Party made a decision. We decided to clear the decks. We supported some government legislation that we thought had general support amongst all three political parties. We made sure that those pieces of legislation were approved and guided through the House before we left in December in hopes that the government, that Premier Wynne and the Liberals, would table a jobs plan. We've been pleading this case for months and months and months: that the government table a jobs plan and have a plan to create good private sector jobs. The last thing that we need is a government that doesn't have job creation as a primary focus.

Here we are now, six months later. We don't see anything that resembles a jobs plan. We hear that the Liberals and the New Democrats want to raise taxes to businesses and middle-class families through corporate

tax hikes and also through increasing the gas tax by up to 10 cents a litre—which was a panel that the government engaged.

You know what, Speaker? There is one party that wants to talk about job creation, that wants to have job creation as number one in this Ontario Legislature, and that's the Ontario PC Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

You know what? If you wanted to play a trick to have us all here and debating, it should be Thursday afternoon, when Mr. Hudak's million jobs plan is being debated here as a private member's bill. That's the bill we need to rally around. It has got a five-point plan that will lower hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses, that lowers taxes and reins in government spending. As we all know, our Ontario debt has doubled since the Liberals took office.

It promotes skilled trades and lowers the apprenticeship ratio—very, very important aspects, that we could make the change now, to be able to provide those good trades jobs. It also eliminates red tape that forces small and medium-sized business owners to spend time filling in paperwork rather than hiring more employees.

Unlike the Liberals and the NDP, the PCs are the only party with a plan. It's called the million jobs plan. It's going to be debated here Thursday afternoon. I really hope that all the parties that are involved will rally together, will put job creation at the forefront and quit the political games.

Again, Speaker, I want to just say how disappointed I am in the government, in the fact that we've always had a long-standing tradition, when it comes to municipalities, that we would provide members the opportunity to leave. To me, it just shows that this government is anti-rural Ontario and anti-municipal government.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to have a few minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: My colleague from Leeds—Grenville, I think, has pretty well laid it out here, that this is abhorrent, what they've done today.

I have a number of people down at Good Roads who were expecting all of our colleagues to be there, to be able to interact. This is something that everyone knows about. The calendar is blocked for months in advance. They've made time to travel—some of them, hundreds of miles—to be here, to be able to interact. And now our whole day changes because, on a whim, this government tries this type of trickery and bullying.

It's absolutely shameful, Speaker. It's a slight to rural Ontario. It's certainly a slight to the hard-working people in those municipalities that came here to be able to dialogue and find a way forward.

I hear every day of the week from people in our municipalities who are wondering where they're going to go. The OPP—this morning, I met with the minister at 7:45 down there, to talk about that with the municipality—they're going to go up \$1.5 million if this new

funding model goes in. It's pretty hard in a community where there are only 5,100 permanent residents.

These types of things—it starts to make you wonder that maybe they're taking a lot of flak down there. Maybe they're taking a lot of serious questions that they just don't know how to answer, because they don't truly have a plan out of the nightmare they've created over the last 10 years with the way they've spent and overspent and got us into the debt and deficit situation they have.

We need to be focusing in this House—there are nearly a million unemployed men and women in Ontario. We agreed many months ago to clear the decks. Last September, we agreed to clear the decks of all the other bills on the table so we could focus on a jobs plan to give people hope, to give them that opportunity that there's a better future, to ensure that our young people aren't leaving to head to the west, perhaps never returning to our great, great province. And yet, from Premier Wynne, there's no jobs plan.

We spend all this time talking in this House, and yet they do something like this that just basically shows disrespect for the whole process. It shows disrespect for the protocols that I believe we normally try to uphold. Our House leader, I know—I can tell by the look on his face how concerned he was about this abrupt change of plan that was sprung on us today. It truly is going to be a confidence—I think my colleague from Leeds—Grenville shared that with us, that this is a confidence motion. This is something that can't be taken lightly. Who knows what ramifications it could have?

What we need right now in Ontario is a jobs plan. We need to create jobs and attract businesses to this province, rather than the multitudes that this government is responsible for chasing out of our province and, with it, that hope for the future for our kids, those people sitting in front of you and serving us, this new crop of pages who are here day in and day out, serving us.

Our leader, the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, Tim Hudak, has that plan. It is being debated this Thursday. Again, it starts to make me wonder: Are they trying to just change the focus as we lead up to that? Because this week, we should have been talking about it, we should have been openly debating—the third party, the government and us talking about a jobs plan.

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I'd be remiss not to say, Speaker, we're the only party on record with a plan. There's nothing from the NDP, other than platitudes; there's absolutely nothing other than same old, same old from the Liberals, and we know what that has done in the last 11 years: It has driven us to having one million men and women unemployed in this province.

We have a pretty simple five-point plan. It would lower the hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses. Everyone out there is screaming and hollering about hydro rates. The business owners—I met last week with Ice River Springs in my riding. They're facing a potential \$1.5-million increase in their operating, just as a result of hydro alone. How can they incorporate that into their business plan with no thought process, Speaker?

Families every day—the United Way is screaming out there. They're pleading and begging for mercy for the people they represent who can't afford to turn on the heat, to turn up the heat—in some cases, have no heat or they're choosing between food and/or heat. So that's a huge dilemma.

I bet you a buck right now down at Good Roads, or this morning, when those ministers were down there—I bet you they got an earful about that and the OPP issue that I was talking about earlier. We need to lower taxes and rein in the government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the last 10 years.

I wonder how many people listening today or on this side of the House—the people who support them—understand that we spend \$10.3 billion on interest payments. What could that do for the less fortunate of our society? What could that do for our hospitals, our schools, those people with mental health challenges, those people who have not got housing that they need, affordable housing? There are multitudes of things, from the social services side of things, that we could be doing.

We need to increase trade with the provinces across Canada. We're in a global economy, but even in our own backyard we need to be opening up those trade agreements so we can easily transport goods across borders and ensure that we have jobs and viability going forward, and we need to eliminate the red tape. I hear it every day ad nauseam from small businesses, big business, that this government has done nothing but put more in there.

It's very interesting to me that we have lots of platitudes about this, and today what I had prepared for was to talk about the infrastructure, Bill 141. The minister talked a lot about what this infrastructure bill could do for community projects, such as the building of new hospitals, and what long-term infrastructure planning could do for the economy, such as the creation of 800 new jobs. But no such specific or practical measures are in this Bill 141.

If you look at infrastructure backlog in my riding—the great people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and particularly in the Markdale catchment area, raised \$12 million for a new hospital, and they're still waiting to this day to get approval. Just think of the jobs that one project alone would create in a small, rural community, not to mention the long-term benefits of health care that would be there and the jobs and long-term sustainability for that community. Frankly, this government—they have no plan, and that scares me.

Hospitals are just one of the problems; a fair share of the gas tax for rural transportation is another. My colleague John Yakabuski put this on the floor seven times, I believe it was, before he finally got it through. If that money would flow, we would be there.

That brings up—in this House, just before the recess, I introduced my private member's resolution to strike a committee for rural transportation in northern Ontario and rural transportation. I'd like to ask the government today where that is in their priority and what they've done with that, because everyone agreed to that and said, "This is a good idea. We need to do it."

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: They don't care, you're right, or it would already be in place. I've heard nothing from the government since the day I tabled it in this House with any idea that they will make that a priority.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Exactly. Good point, Mr. Yurek.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other things that I can talk about. The Wiarton airport, now owned by the townships of South Bruce Peninsula and Georgian Bluffs—it's a joint collaborative; it's a federal airport that has been there forever; it's a very viable and needed, necessary component of our infrastructure—needs a new runway and upgrades. Is this government committing to do that? That would create jobs. That would ensure again the economic viability. We hear nothing about that. The feds are prepared. The feds are at the table and prepared to do some of this, but we need the province to be there.

The Markdale Hospital, as I've already mentioned—\$12 million sitting in the bank doing nothing to help people. They're cancelling two hip surgeries in my riding. Last week I heard about it. These people were ready to go, and they cancelled because there's not enough money in the system. So where is that happening, Mr. Speaker?

Bridges alone in Bruce and Grey county—I believe there are 150-plus bridges that need to be replaced. Think of the work and employment that would create, if they would put just a little bit of a ripple out into rural Ontario.

Georgian College's marine education program: We have the opportunity right now—it's being divested by the federal government; it's currently in Port Stanley—to move that to Georgian College in Owen Sound. We have the best simulator in the country. We have the Great Lakes that we're surrounded by. We have the shipping industry. We have a niche market there that could ensure—but you know what's going to happen, Mr. Speaker? If this government doesn't get off their hands and actually help out with this—now, they have provided, in fairness, a little bit of one-time transition funding, but this infrastructure funding on a pretty small scale is probably the best bang for the buck they could get to ensure that there are long-term economic opportunities in our community, a thriving community, and ensure that those students have something to look forward to, not to mention promoting a sustainable industry such as shipping, which has had such a huge background in our community.

I just can't say again that it deplores me that this government would play these sneaky games, take us off topic and they're not coming out with anything credible on the jobs plan. A million people wake up every morning wondering, "What's going to happen to me? What's going to happen to my children?" We need to ensure that every day we're in this House we're looking at jobs. We need to be lowering taxes, lowering hydro rates and ensuring that this great province gets back on its feet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we're now all aware, we're presently addressing the supply motion. We're not addressing Bill 141, the infrastructure legislation. Personally, I consider this a bit of a betrayal. I understand there was agreement probably made last week to follow a legislative calendar for the coming week. In my view, planning is very, very important. To spring something like this on this Legislature at the last minute is obviously a very clear indication of poor planning and lack of foresight, lack of any semblance of management or adequate administration. Maybe it falls into the category of jiggery-pokery. I've seen enough of that over the past 18 years in this Legislature. If this is an example of wedging or jiggery-pokery, if there's something beyond just merely incompetence, I really find that disgusting.

With respect to the supply motion and the allocation of money—and I recognize it focuses on the allocation of tax money to pay civil servant salaries; not only salaries but the broader compensation package. It does raise the question in this Legislature, given that half the Ontario budget goes towards public sector compensation, how much of this kind of allocation is subtracted from so many other valuable projects, construction projects, operating budgets in our hospitals, our infrastructure for hydro transmission and power generation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry. I have an obligation to point out to the member that the word "jiggery-pokery" is unparliamentary, and ask him to withdraw that word, "jiggery-pokery."

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do withdraw the expression "jiggery-pokery." Maybe someone can give me a synonym for that word.

At any rate, we're talking about the allocation of money, the allocation of scarce resources. I won't dwell on the process that we're involved in right now, but I do ask all present to consider also the bigger picture. Of course, public sector salaries, and pensions, and perks, and holiday time and early retirement—this is all very important. But let's think about some of the other things that our tax dollars are allocated towards. Just imagine our country without the pipeline network that we have for oil and natural gas. Imagine our country without CN Rail lines, the CP lines or the Trans-Canada Highway.

At the time and over the years—many of these projects go back 100 years—much of that money went back to the actual construction, not so much to the human resources or the paying of the salary itself. Unfortunately, over the past few years, wasteful spending has held so many of these good projects at ransom. Essentially, the projects are dependent on borrowed money. We know that the deficit this year is coming in at something close to \$11 billion. We don't know yet. So when you're looking at a deficit of \$11 billion on \$125 billion in overall spending, it just begs the question: Are we doing a good enough job at allocating these scarce tax resources?

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As we debate what I consider a last-minute supply motion, we should all keep in mind the fiscal projections from this government's own hand-picked economist, Don

Drummond. He has given us a road map. His projection is now that four years down the road we will be staring down the barrel of a \$30.2-billion deficit. Four years from now—and this is based on his economic projections and fiscal projections for this present government, I do wish to point out—we will be looking at a debt of \$411.4 billion. So let's keep this debate on allocating money to civil servants in context as we talk about this government's budget and supply decisions.

The decisions we're discussing today—there is merit in investment, obviously, when you've got well over \$100 billion or \$125 billion coming in every year, to boost the economy and build our communities, whether they're in the city or in the country, and generate jobs. We have to look at these kinds of decisions and really follow a matrix or certain principles.

First of all, are we getting adequate and long-term return on our investment in Ontario's civil servants? Is this investment in salaries, wages, pensions and perks stimulating productivity and economic competitiveness? It obviously maintains public sector jobs. Is it creating private sector jobs? Does it maximize tax assessment value? Does it grow our tax base, this spending of money on civil servant pensions?

Our present debt is something in the order of \$278 billion. As I mentioned, we're probably adding another \$11 billion this year on top of that, and we're heading down the road to \$411.4 billion. When you're dealing with that kind of ever-growing debt, what kind of reputation do you have in the rest of the country? What kind of reputation do you have in the rest of the world? Have we acquired a reputation, say specifically in the investment community and the business community? It begs the question of people who are in the business of producing goods and services. The question is: Why come to Ontario—or why stay in Ontario, for that matter—with such poor finances and with such a less-than-adequate fiscal reputation with respect to Ontario government spending?

When you're spending too much, it can only smother the long-term integrity of this province's fiscal health, its infrastructure and its potential for the additional creation of jobs. Ontario spends something like \$12 billion a year on capital projects. That's close to what we spend every year in interest on the debt. That doesn't even hold a candle to what we are spending, as we will be finding out through the supply motion, on wages and salaries and public sector compensation.

When we talk about the allocation of money, we're all certainly aware of the multi-millions of dollars of wasteful spending that takes place, again, because of poor planning. I used the example today of poor planning by springing this motion at the last minute. Obviously, there must be some kind of good reason that somebody didn't know about why this motion should be debated this afternoon.

Wasteful spending occurs because of a lack of oversight, and we only need to reflect back on the Ornge air ambulance scandal to see the price you pay for a lack of

oversight, certainly a lack of transparency and a lack of control. Control is another major function of management, as is planning; again, anybody who's in the business of government administration should be aware of that.

I feel that this government, during our debate—I see the Liberal members so far haven't been standing up to debate their own motion—should be explaining why it cannot reprioritize a part of this money. I use the example of \$12 billion for projects, building hospitals, schools and long-term-care facilities—building bridges and what have you. We're focusing on the government human resources that work in those hospitals, schools and long-term-care facilities. We also have to bear in mind maintenance, improvement to the infrastructure—new build when appropriate.

Again, I wish to wrap it up there, Speaker. I'm certainly aware that the speaker following me is anxious to contribute to this debate. I appreciate the 10 minutes of time on the supply motion debate. It's regrettable that we can't be doing the normal business of the House this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend our initial speaker, Mr.—

Mr. Steve Clark: Clark.

Mr. John O'Toole: —Clark. The reason is that he made the point very clearly that—he is our former critic for municipal affairs, and he made very clear the unfair tactic being used today.

The viewers today should know that there was a bill—I believe it was 141—that was supposed to be debated, and members came prepared to speak on Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. That's a shame. It's a misuse of members' time here.

But Mr. Clark from Leeds–Grenville, I think, would have been much more comfortable this afternoon working with his municipal leaders to listen to their concerns and represent them effectively and fairly. I know how passionate he is, as our former critic in that area and a former mayor as well. I'll only say this, too: All the members on all sides are being shortchanged today because of the tactic used by the government.

One must ask for the motive. First of all, you should look at why they would do that. They don't want us to have the chance to tell them, as Mr. Clark said, about the downloading of responsibilities for policing and infrastructure issues, as well as the jobs and economy issues that we're all faced with in our ridings, specifically in rural Ontario.

They don't want us to tell the story that the municipal leaders will want us to hear, about the plight of the economy itself. I've heard it myself in my riding. It includes Uxbridge, which is a smaller community of under 20,000 people, as well as Clarington, which is a larger community of about 80,000 people made up of a number of municipalities, as well as Scugog and Port Perry—just under 20,000 people as well. I know that the

leaders there have the same issues as the other members are hearing, but are they telling the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Health about the issues within their riding? We should be at those conventions, listening to the locally elected, front-line political people, duly elected people representing their constituents. That's a shame for the people of Ontario, to know that there's been a tradition—as Mr. Clark said as well in his opening remarks—of this day being set aside so members, especially from rural Ontario, could attend the ROMA/Good Roads convention. I myself am intending to go down after the normal debate for this afternoon at 6 o'clock, to be down there to meet with my constituents and municipal leaders.

I think the issues that we're hearing are high hydro rates—we saw today a demonstration that the minister almost chuckled at, in disrespect for the demonstration that was here at noon from the women who are concerned about the health of their children. It was called, I believe, women against wind energy. That demonstration is an effective way for politics to be brought into our Legislature by constituents who are living with their concerns. That issue, I believe, is another case where we should be listening to our constituents more effectively.

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Energy: Over the last few months, both the price of propane and the price of fuel oil have skyrocketed, much under the watch of this government, without tipping any of them off to get ahead and look at supply—and also the high hydro rates, and then the Ontario Hydro One billing screw-ups. It's tragic how they've been fighting with constituents who normally pay their bill—they didn't get the bill, so they didn't pay it, obviously—and then sending them one that's triple the amount that they're expecting to pay, and then blaming them, charging them, what they call having an account set up in case they don't pay their bill. I forget what that's called.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: A reserve fee being put in so that they can protect—this is the way this government has gone.

I'm surprised—over the next few months, we've got this concurrence in supply motion here today and the estimates motion that are being debated, and I say to you this: These are just tactics that are being used. There's a convention here that these bills will be paid and have to be paid; they are on the order paper and will be paid. Yes, there's a debate set aside; it's 40 minutes. More surprisingly, though, not one Liberal member has stood up. I'm not supposed to say this, but there are very few of them here. I didn't name—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, there's only five here, though.

I withdraw.

I think that if the people of Ontario only knew—I wonder if I could ask the people on the camera to shine

the camera over there. The camera will tell the truth of what's going on here.

Now, where are they? They're down there feeding them the lines—I say “spinning the lines” down there: “Trust me, it will be okay.” I think it's shameful, the last while.

If you look at just one of the recent—I'm going to finish off with this. This is fairly simple—an article from the paper. It's not some crib notes. I'll just read it. If you listen, this will be a good editorial on—here it is here:

“The Year of Wynne Low-Lights List.” It's from the Toronto paper on February 12—just recently—2014. I'll read it here, with your indulgence:

“(1) Running for cover:

“Whether it was the \$1.1-billion gas plant fiasco, the Pan Am Games expense scandal or the child porn charges against her close confidante on the education file, Ben Levin, the Premier has proven adept at trying to sweep her ties and her involvement with anything the least bit contentious under the rug.” I'm reading this. This isn't something I'm making up. I'll send a copy to the members on the other side—the five or six of them.

“(2) Buying votes:

“A Scarborough subway for \$1.4-billion to ensure Mitzie Hunter wins a summer by-election?”—what a tragedy. It's like buying an election. I'll continue here—“Done. Re-opening teacher contracts at a possible cost of \$500 million to buy labour peace and shore up teacher union support?”—I'm reading this; I'm not saying one way or another—“Done. Another \$100 million in goodies for the Niagara Falls area to garner support in the Feb. 13 by-election? ... There's no group this Premier won't buy to stay in power.

“(3) Debt denial:

“Proving she's a tax and spendaholic at heart, Wynne recently admitted she's prepared to abandon her party's short-lived austerity agenda by spending her way out of Ontario's deficit-ridden troubles (meaning right down the road to Greece).” Remember, I'm reading this. It's not something I wrote. It's such a statement about the kind of government you have—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Hang on here. You brought this up today to give me this chance to say it; now listen to it:

“(4) Cutting on the backs of seniors”—I'm one of them, and I'm starting to feel the pain. So is Phil McNeely here.

“They call it transforming the health care system. But what Wynne, and her BFF”—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, member from Mississauga-Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: My colleague from Durham has repeatedly flouted the House's accepted practice of referring to members by either their office or by their riding, and I would appreciate the Chair reminding him that he is not to use the name of a member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would remind all members of the House that it is our convention and our preferred approach that when you're referring to

another member of the House, you talk about their ministry responsibility or their riding and not use their name.

The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Ottawa—Orléans is a good friend of mine. I have some time for him. He's an engineer.

“(4) Cutting on the backs of seniors:

“They call it transforming the health care system. But what Wynne, and her BFF Deb Matthews”—

Interjection: BFF.

Mr. John O'Toole: Her best friend. Anyway, that's a BlackBerry code language. I'm not making this up.

This is what has happened under her watch, the follow-up for McGuinty—“much-needed services for vulnerable seniors like OHIP-funded diabetes strips and physiotherapy. Home care”—and for stroke victims—“is still a mess.”

I couldn't have written it any better, and I'm going to send a personal thank you to the author of this article for the time that they spent on it. It wouldn't take much time, because everything they do now is trying to buy an election.

This bill today—I expect that we would approve of a proper debate on issues as important as concurrence in supply and estimates. This isn't happening, because they are not participating in the debate, and they use it as a treacherous way to make sure that we can't attend the ROMA/Good Roads convention. It's a tragedy in Ontario today, what's happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wanted to listen to the debate from my friends from the Conservative Party before getting up, because I would be the only speaker in this particular debate and I didn't want to use the full 40 minutes.

Let me just say a couple of things at the top of this debate. I agree with them on the one part, and I disagree with them on the other. I think they're right, in the sense that we had met at House leaders' last week. We had set the agenda last week, on Thursday. We had set the agenda so that this House sits Monday through Thursday and we would know what the order of the business of the House is.

All of us know, and I think the point is well made, that all of our municipal representatives are here from across Ontario, meeting at OGRA as we speak today. I had meetings that I was scheduled into, and now I have to be here because of this procedural motion that's before us in regard to interim supply and concurrence. As a result, all of these municipal people that we were supposed to meet with are essentially left high and dry because we have to be here because the government decided to change the order of business in this House for this week.

I think that's not a good thing to do, on all kinds of fronts, but I would agree with my friends from the Conservative caucus in this sense: Did the government really want to do that as a way of being able to stop members from the opposition from being at OGRA? Because they

are in a position where a lot of these municipalities are mad at them for all kinds of issues having to do with some of the downloading that has happened and some of the issues that are currently facing our communities, from energy policies to what's happening with hydro prices etc., was it part of the government's strategy to try to keep opposition members away from OGRA? Now, I hope that's not the case, because we know that OGRA is going to be meeting again tomorrow, and we hope that the government is not going to try to do something else tomorrow that would put us all in the position of having to be back here again, in order not to meet with those municipalities.

But I've got to say that when I got the news from my honourable colleague the honourable House leader for the Liberal government—as I told him, I said I was disappointed. I thought we were pretty clear, as a caucus. We had said that we would support interim supply, that we would support concurrence in supply, because without that, this would be like American politics. It would be like the Tea Party doing what they did in the United States: deciding to roll the dice and to play around and play political games so that in the end, you would have no authority to be able to spend money this year or next year. That has nothing to do with this; this is a routine motion that this House deals with all the time. The responsible thing to do is to allow the motion to go forward, because at the end, if the government in this House does not pass the interim supply motion, there's no mechanism to spend money into the next year. Once this House—

Mr. Norm Miller: Good.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: See, this is the problem. The Conservative member says, “Good,” but here's the problem that we're faced: If, in fact, we were to vote it down, the LG, the Lieutenant Governor, would be in a very hard place to undo the will of the House. Then what? No money to pay for hospitals; no money to pay for air ambulances; no money to pay for our schools; no monies to pay for Elections Ontario to run an election, because they would not have the authority to spend money.

You know, the Conservatives are really good at playing games here and saying, “We're the big defenders of whoever, and we're going to just do everything we can to bring the government down,” including putting this government—not this government, this province—into chaos in the same way that the Tea Party in the United States did when it came to what the Republican Tea Party was doing with the budget process in the United States.

1440

I agree with you. There's a time and a place for elections. It will be the people who will have the final say about who the next government is, but while we're here, we need to exercise our responsibilities in this Legislature in a way that's responsible.

Let's be clear: This is an interim supply motion to give the authority for the spending of money from April 1 until the end of September. If this motion fails—you're right; it's a matter of confidence—the government would

fall, but you'd be trying to fight an election without any ability for the government to pay its bills. So while we'd be out there knocking on doors, Elections Ontario couldn't set up a voting mechanism because they couldn't spend money. The hospitals wouldn't be able to operate. Our air ambulance system would be grounded, and what kind of election would that be? The people would be looking at us and saying, “Who are you, you bunch of boobys?” At the end of the day, we have a responsibility to do what has to be done so that people are able to get the services they want.

Let's be really clear what we're voting on here today. It's an interim supply motion to allow the expenditures to go out from April 1 till six months later so that the province is able to run the administration of government as we go into an election, should there be an election this spring. For the official opposition to take the position, “We're voting against, and you guys should vote against, too. This is the only way to do it. We're opposed to the Liberals, and we're going to show we're true to our word”—what you're really showing is that you're pretty darned irresponsible. You lack leadership as a party and you lack leadership when it comes to understanding what your responsibility is in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. New Democrats will vote in support of the interim supply motion because it is a procedural issue, number one; and number two, it is the responsible thing to do because if we don't, the province of Ontario's services will stop as of April 1. There will be no mechanism to get those monies back because the LG would not undo what the decision of this Legislature is, and it would put this province into chaos.

Mr. Speaker, there are times for elections and there are times for elections, but I think we need to take our responsibility correctly here in this Legislature and pass this interim supply motion, a motion that we've always passed normally by voice vote because everybody has understood this is strictly a procedural motion that is normally passed by a voice vote. But in this case, the Tea Party of Ontario—or, should I say, the American Tea Party that's working here in Ontario—wants to make a statement, and if that's what they're doing, I don't want any part of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the Ontario PC caucus deputy whip. As such, this vote will be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader again.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; the Ministry of Transportation; the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; the Ministry of Energy; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Infrastructure; the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; the Office of Francophone Affairs; and the Ministry of Consumer Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Milloy has moved government orders 11 through 21 inclusive.

I again recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: My remarks today on this series of motions will be as brief as those in the previous motion about supply. Although these are extremely important matters before the Legislature, and the votes themselves are very important, they do have a routine or administrative aspect to them.

Mr. Speaker, I'll begin by giving members and those watching on TV some background on what concurrence in estimates is. Concurrence represents the Legislature's approval of estimates for a fiscal year. In this case, we are discussing the 2013-14 fiscal year. Concurrence is required for all ministries and offices that have been selected for review by the Standing Committee on Estimates. Estimates of ministries and offices not selected by the committee are deemed concurred in by the Legislature. In this case, the committee selected 11 ministries and offices for review, and you've heard both the Clerk and myself, as I moved it, outline what those 11 are. We had a motion earlier that we can deal with them all together in the course of this debate.

In November 2013, the committee reported on its review of selected estimates to the Legislative Assembly. The assembly's concurrence in estimates which we are speaking about today represents the approval of these selected ministries and offices estimates.

The Supply Act would be introduced following orders in concurrence and estimates and, if passed, would represent the final statutory authority for spending by the government in this assembly. So today's discussion and vote are important steps in approving government spending for this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, I'll now take a moment to remind members where we are in the fiscal cycle. Our estimates volume 1 was tabled in May 2013. The estimates set out a comprehensive account of the government's intended expenditures for the fiscal year and include details of the spending plans that were presented in our 2013 budget. As we near the end of this fiscal year, we will soon be introducing the Supply Act, should concurrence in estimates be reached. So today's concurrence in the estimates discussion is required to move towards finalizing the review of estimates that has taken place.

Although a very important matter before the Legislature—obviously, this is concurring in the operations of

these ministries of government and allowing them to pay the bills—this is a routine matter, an administrative matter which the Legislature is called upon to deal with from time to time.

As in the debate before, I'm merely going to refresh members on what we're dealing with today. We look forward to the debate and discussion.

As I say, from the perspective of the government side of the House, this is a routine administrative matter, and I think my remarks will serve as our statement on the record and, obviously, our support for this important mechanism to allow us to govern.

With that, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and look forward to other debate and discussion from the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's always a pleasure to stand up and speak in this House, but unfortunately, speaking to this is somewhat alarming to me. The House leader mentioned that this is an extremely important but routine matter. I don't think there's anything routine enough that we should not consider it important enough to have wholesome debate about.

I'm not sure what about this debate the government is afraid about having—that they're not willing to have a full debate with everybody in the House. We know full well that the tradition of this House is that when a certain convention is on, members are more free to attend it and nothing important or that is of a critical nature will generally happen in the House, especially by surprise, Speaker. The fact that this bill has been brought forward at a late date, today, by surprise and by this government shows that, again, there's something to hide; there's some sort of transparency issue that this government has. Although they call themselves open and accountable, I find it very alarming. Notwithstanding that, Speaker, I find it cheap; I find it cheap politicking.

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It's taken a lot of us away from business that we had planned for today that was quite important. I just walked away from a Family Service Ontario meeting, where I was actually getting some excellent information to do with my critic portfolio, that I had to cut short, half short, so I could to make sure I was down here to help support some of my colleagues who have to be somewhere else to support their municipalities in their ridings, at another location.

I'm lucky. I'm glad that I had the opportunity to be here and to be able to speak to it on their behalf, but I think it really shows a distaste, a disdain, that this government has for rural Ontario, to be able to actually put in place this bill and force some members to be here when they have important business to do somewhere else—and they know it; the members opposite in government know this. That is cheap politicking.

You know what? Frankly, it's pathetic, and it reeks of a government and a Premier that is clinging to power every single minute they possibly can. No new leader in a credible democracy works this way. No credible leader,

no leader of a government, behaves like this, and it is very alarming that we are being manipulated like this.

Here's the other thing, Speaker: Part of the reason that this supply motion even has to exist is because several weeks ago—a couple of weeks ago, anyway—the finance minister wrote to the Clerk of the Legislature to confirm that he would not be tabling the third-quarter Ontario finances by February 15, which is a deadline that's required by the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. So, to be clear, the Minister of Finance wrote a letter to the Clerk stating that he would not be abiding by the government's own act. What does that say, when the government isn't willing to play by the rules? It isn't willing to play by tradition or parliamentary tradition that allows government to act and behave smoothly, and give the opposition ample time for preparation and for debate. Instead, the government wrote that he would instead be tendering those numbers along with the budget, in the 2014 budget.

We're in a place, in a stage in this government, where we're just full of scandal. It happens over and over again. I don't even know where to start. You can go back as far as eHealth, Speaker. We can go back as far as Ornge and the gas plants and the Pan Am Games—ongoing. We still don't have all the questions answered about that. I'm sure we'll be hearing a lot more about that in the coming days. Really, it is troubling that we're not having the opportunity to be able to debate these things with the people in the House, I think, who would like to be here for this. It's troubling. Just the whole procedure of it is troubling.

I also think it's kind of rich for the socialist party—sorry, I mean the NDP party of Ontario—to accuse us, the PC Party of Ontario, of playing games when it's the government that is full-on playing a game with the timetable of this House and taking full advantage of a situation that's happening outside of here for their own political gain. It is cheap politics at best, and I think it's something that they should be ashamed of.

It's funny; I noticed the House leader for the NDP giving us a lecture on what responsibility in the House is. You know what? Our responsibility in this House is to hold this government accountable for its actions. It's something that this party hasn't got a clue about over the past two years, having propped them up time and time again, and making deals with them they have even reneged on. They haven't even lived up to your deals. I mean, it's sad. You keep getting taken over and over again. Stop being so naive over there. Call it what it is. If you're afraid of an election—you say you are over and over again; we understand that. But it's time to pay the piper.

If this government is going to do anything—it's clear they're going to say and do anything they possibly can to stay in power every inch of the way. It's sadly evident that the socialist—I'm sorry, the NDP party of Ontario—is going to do whatever they can to prop them up. Frankly, you've never had more power, not since the 1990s, when you blew it.

This is a time Ontario doesn't need politics. Ontario needs leadership. It needs a government that's willing to

take the bull by the horns and lead from the front. We haven't seen any of this from this government, and today is a blazing example of a government that knows nothing about leading from the front. We haven't seen any new, bold ideas. We've seen lots of shiny legislation with pretty names that does nothing for the people of Ontario—except for trick them into believing that they're actually getting something done, in many cases, which is shameful. Now they're trying to trick the people of Ontario and even this Legislature into thinking that a supply motion is unimportant, and that it's a routine proceeding.

The government House leader talked about giving a background. Let me give you context. The context in which we are debating this today is that we had fully intended to debate an infrastructure bill this afternoon. Everyone in this House, I would hope, came prepared to be able to do that. They're unable to do that now because the government, at the last minute—as they have the right to do—changed the schedule. Therefore, many of us have to switch gears quickly and start debating things that, although broad, don't give us any time to prepare for.

That tells me one of two things: Either you don't respect the work that's done in this House, or you're scared of something. You don't want something to happen, so you're trying to manipulate a situation, maybe to keep some of our members from going to the ROMA conference so that they can talk to their constituents about issues that are very serious to them—

Mr. Bill Walker: Like infrastructure.

Mr. Rod Jackson: —like infrastructure, like policing, and any number of—

Mr. Bill Walker: Hydro rates.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Hydro rates is a great one, as the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound mentioned. Let's talk about hydro rates for a second. I was just back in my home riding over the weekend, and there's not one person—I went into a pizza store just last night, actually, and the first thing he said to me was, "What are you guys going to do about hydro rates?" It's killing his business; it's absolutely killing it.

Interjection: Tell us about your plan.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Here, let me tell you what the plan is.

Interjection.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes, you know what? We need to cut the subsidies to the Green Energy Act, just like you guys have put in there, and you know what? You got nothing for it. There's absolutely no more energy being produced by green energy now than there was when you instituted that plan. There are more businesses paying more for your energy than ever before, and it's chasing them out. You can't say it's not, and if you do, you're not telling—

Mr. Bill Walker: Telling an untruth?

Mr. Rod Jackson: —telling the total truth.

Businesses are leaving. We've got many examples of it. We got an example in Barrie, just recently, where

there's a manufacturer that's been there for almost 20 years supplying car parts for Honda. They're gone. One of the biggest manufacturers in Barrie is gone, and do you know why they're gone? Because they can't afford their hydro. They can't afford hydro, and they're having infrastructure problems with getting their trucks in and out of there, so they're moving somewhere else. They're gone. That's hundreds and hundreds of jobs gone, and it's because of the ineptitude of this government to actually grab the bull by the horns, do the right thing and stop chasing businesses out of Ontario that are actually growing.

We know that a massive percentage of people—I think it's 75% of all the people who are employed in Ontario—are employed by businesses with four or less employees. That tells me that big business is small business. We know that those businesses, when they start up—and have the ability to be started up, are young and are healthy—have the ability to grow to be 10, 20 or 120 people strong, three, four, five or 10 years later. That's what we need to be doing: actually creating that environment that they can thrive, grow and be the businesses of tomorrow in.

This government doesn't seem to be interested at all in doing that. They talk about it a lot—and that's fine, because it makes us realize that they actually understand the problem, which is the first step out of denial. But the second step is to actually do something about it. You can't talk about it; you have to do something about it.

This isn't getting it done. This is a delay tactic. This is delaying putting the budget together. This is delaying actually getting work done at ROMA. This is delaying and actually obfuscating this House's business, doing what we ought to be doing. I think it's shameful, Speaker.

It's time this government actually stood up, did the right thing, stopped wasting Ontario taxpayers' time and made sure that we're all—from all sides in this House—doing the right thing, which is representing the people of Ontario, making sure that we get them back to work and making sure that we're creating an environment that we create jobs in. That's not being done here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. This should be good.

This morning, 600,000 men and women in Ontario woke up without a job. Heinz, Kellogg's, Caterpillar: These are all companies that recently announced they're shutting Ontario operations and heading for greener pastures. They're still making ketchup, they're still making cereal and they're still making earth-moving equipment; they're just not making them here in Ontario.

With Ontario boasting the highest energy prices in North America, the highest payroll taxes in Canada, 86 consecutive months with unemployment higher than the national average and a government about to raise the gas tax and raise corporate taxes, is it any wonder why companies are abandoning Ontario in record numbers?

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In addition, other companies are bypassing Ontario as they search for a place to set up shop. Whatever happened to this once-powerful province of Ontario, the envy of Confederation? In fact, Ontario, once the engine of Confederation, has, under this Liberal government, become a have-not province, relying on equalization payments from the federal government. We had a low debt-to-GDP. We had low unemployment, cheap hydro and less red tape, but look what's happened over the last decade: expensive energy, high taxes, crushing red tape—the perfect storm to kill jobs in Ontario.

Families open their hydro bills to find they're now paying the highest electricity prices in North America. Businesses that set up shop in Ontario for our cheap hydro are leaving in record numbers. Hydro rates have tripled in 10 years, and the government has told us they will increase a further 50% over the next few years. Corporate taxes, which were scheduled to fall from 11.5% to 10% in the 2012 budget, were left at that level as part of the Liberals' deal with the NDP to win their support. Now, as part of the Big Move to fund transit in Toronto and Hamilton, in addition to taxing families a further 10 cents a litre for gasoline, the government is planning on raising business taxes to 12%. As a result, Ontario businesses will be paying the highest corporate taxes amongst the large provinces in Canada. In addition, Ontario employers and employees pay the highest payroll taxes in Canada. When you add the newly created WSIB tax and the College of Trades tax, neither of which offer any value to any businessperson, a clear tax-and-spend picture forms.

Recently, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business held a Red Tape Awareness Week and disclosed that burdensome red tape costs Canadian families a whopping \$11 billion annually. That's money that can't be reinvested in their business as it is used for non-value-added activity.

Let's look at these three things: high energy, high taxes and burdensome red tape. We'll start with energy. In 2011, after serving my first three months as PC energy critic, it was apparent that while energy rates had doubled, they were about to skyrocket. The Auditor General had just presented his scathing report on the Green Energy Act, but sadly, two and a half years later, the Liberals still show no sign of changing course, which is why energy rates have tripled under this government and are about to go 50% higher. What we saw was a government with a social engineering plan in mind called the Green Energy Act. When this disaster started, Ontario produced 25% of all of our energy from green energy: water power, the cleanest, greenest, most reliable, most affordable form of renewable energy. Now, several years later and many billions of dollars later, Ontario still produces 25% of all of our green energy, 22% now from water and 3% from wind. It has not changed from 25% green energy in Ontario, despite the billions. There's nothing green about the Green Energy Act.

Now that a few more facts have come to surface, the message has expanded to include more details on the

global adjustment charge. The Auditor General pointed out that wind generators operate at 28% capacity and wind mostly blows at night when we don't need the power, so we've been paying Quebec and paying the United States to take that surplus power. In fact, almost \$2 billion—that's from the Auditor General—so far has been spent paying American and Quebec hydro utilities to take our power, with it averaging out at about \$500 million a year now. When the wind blows during the day and power is produced, the government was contracted to take that power, but not knowing whether wind would generate power that day, they would have already contracted for all the power we need, so they spill water over Niagara Falls onto idle generators and pay about \$300 million annually not to produce that water power. And when that reaction is maxed out, they turn to our nuclear plants and redirect the steam away from the generators and vent it outside. That little exercise, which we did five different days last year, cost the ratepayers \$80 million. We've got \$500 million in payments to Quebec and the States, \$300 million to spill water over Niagara Falls and \$80 million to vent our steam.

This is all what we call the law of unintended consequences. So when you hear wind proponents saying, "My gosh, wind is only 3% of our total power. It can't have accounted for our rates tripling," they are not taking the law of unintended consequences into that. That \$500-million payment, that \$300-million payment and that \$80-million payment which they don't take into account only happen because we're generating power from wind.

While other jurisdictions are realizing what a disaster this has been, Ontario is doubling down. Back in the time it was announced, when the Auditor General wrote his scathing report, we were producing 1,700 megawatts of wind, with the target to be 10,700 megawatts—six times bigger a problem. But because of so much community pushback on these installations, whether for health concerns, property values, environmental reasons and a whole host of community activism, there's been a partial retreat, and the target has been lowered to 6,500 megawatts. However, there's no comfort in knowing that our electricity problem in Ontario is only going to be four times bigger a catastrophe instead of six times bigger.

While the government claimed the Green Energy Act would create 50,000 jobs, the auditor stated the FIT program loses two to four manufacturing jobs for every so-called green job. I've used this example many times. Xstrata Copper, back in 2011, should have been a siren call to the government. In fact, Xstrata Copper, as you know, terminated 672 men and women in Timmins and crossed the border into Quebec—115 kilometres over—for cheap power. If you remember, we pay the States and we pay Quebec every night to take our power. Quebec lured a company out of Ontario with that many employees into Quebec for cheap power.

But there are also companies that simply will not locate in Ontario because of our hydro rates. The Montreal Gazette revealed that Innovation Metals, a Toronto-based firm, announced plans to set up the

world's first independent, centralized rare earth ore separation plant in Bécancour, Quebec. The company chose the location over several potential sites in Ontario, citing Quebec's low industrial power rate as a major factor. Remember, it's power we paid them to take from us that they're now selling to lure our companies. It's estimated the rare earth metals refinery will require an investment of more than \$200 million and the creation of about 300 new jobs.

This weekend, Professor Ian Lee of Ottawa's Sprott School of Business summarized the Ontario energy situation in a recent Toronto Sun article: "Over the last eight years, the government of Ontario has squandered an energy-competitive advantage that both parties supported from 1909, when Adam Beck created Ontario Hydro," Sprott said.

"For the past century, Ontario has enjoyed an energy advantage that keeps the province competitive with northeastern US states, such as New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio," he said.

"Failed Liberal policies mean we've lost that competitive edge.

"The government squandered it to drive up energy prices by subsidizing people at 10 times above the market price ... to produce a surplus of electricity—that we didn't need in the first place—which we then sold at a loss to the Americans to exacerbate the competitive advantage we have handed them by squandering our cost advantage on energy."

He summed up what it took me two pages to say, Speaker. That's what happened to our energy. That's why we've had triple hydro rates. That's why we have rates which are about to go up another 50%.

Speaker, I will turn my attention to the high taxes in Ontario now. Our partners across the hall here, the Liberals, love to tax and spend all of Ontarians. They believe it is best to add a health tax, a new gas tax or the HST. Speaker, that HST was supposed to add 600,000 jobs, if you remember the sales pitch. They believe they are best positioned to spend your money on things like wind energy, Ornge and cancelling gas plants. Sadly, they continue to spend more than they take in, so they have borrowed annually and grown our debt. The increased taxes and debt load have burdened the economy to the point where we have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the last decade and have seen 86 consecutive months with unemployment higher than the national average.

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There are a number of other factors at play. We just talked about how we got the highest energy prices in North America. Our corporate taxes were scheduled to fall from 11.5% to 10% in the 2012 budget; as I said, as part of the Liberals' deal with the NDP, they left them at that high level. Now as part of the Big Move to fund Toronto transit, in addition to the gas tax, the government is planning on raising business taxes a further 0.5%, to 12%. This will put us with the highest business taxes in all of the large provinces in Canada. But with the Liberal

spending in place, it's still not enough for them. The government forecasts a growing deficit this year of \$11.7 billion, and our debt-to-GDP is scheduled to hit 40% in two years.

There are a few other new taxes that I'd like to address here. In the beginning of 2013, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board required independent contractors and operators to pay WSIB coverage, even though most already have cheaper and better insurance. Mandatory coverage for the construction system is tantamount to a tax on small business, independent tradespeople and contractors. This is cutting into the earnings of small businesses and contractors who would be reinvesting that money. For some now, it will be the straw that breaks their financial back. This legislation forces independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in a partnership and executive officers of corporations in the construction industry to now pay WSIB premiums. This is a tax on hard-working Ontarians designed to cover up the Liberal government's mess, a \$14-billion unfunded liability at the WSIB.

I held a news conference in my constituency office where local woodworker Steve Ciglen, painter Brent Tremblay and general contractor John Best were on hand. They all said they have long held private insurance that offers more extensive coverage and has nothing to gain from handing over a portion of their earnings to the WSIB. "This is a form of legal extortion," said Tremblay, describing the bill as "ugly" and "oppressive." He said the legislation, which requires him to pay premiums of between 7% and 8% on his own income, couldn't have come at a worse economic time. Tremblay said additional costs for business will translate into higher prices for customers. Best said most independent operators like himself, who already have insurance, aren't likely to make a WSIB claim against their own business. The three local tradespeople also agreed that most independent operators will likely hang onto their existing insurance, despite Bill 119, making the legislation that much more expensive.

Speaker, there's a further new tax aimed at tradespeople. Despite its name, the College of Trades is not a school to train skilled workers. Rather, it's a Liberal-created oversight body that has imposed a trades tax through a mandatory membership fee. Its intention is to regulate a wide range of tradespeople from hairdressers to construction workers to electricians and charge them a hefty annual registration fee. Created by provincial legislation in 2009, the College of Trades, which was up and running in 2013, is a regulatory body to oversee trades, but we call it simply another layer of bureaucracy that's going to cost tradespeople between \$100 and \$200 annually and employers between \$600 and \$700 each year. There's a barber in my riding who wrote to me that he was intimidated by one of the inspectors who demanded he stop cutting his customer's hair until he was finished talking. He pulled up in one of those shiny new College of Trades cars, wearing his College of Trades uniform, and was there for one purpose and one purpose

only: to collect the \$120 dues so they could afford to fund this new body and collect more dues from the next barber, the next hairdresser and the next hard-working Ontarian. It serves no other purpose. Collect money, and use it to hire more people to collect more money.

If you really want to shake investor confidence, you can do what this Liberal government did to raise taxes in 2007. This was a very sad story that we haven't talked about in this Legislature. The Liberal government made a very sudden change to the tax structure for diamond mines very close to the start of production at the Victor Mine in Ontario's Far North.

The Victor Mine is Ontario's first and only diamond mine, and, after this government pulled this stunt, quite likely it will be our last diamond mine. The government proposed to introduce a diamond royalty system under the Mining Act. At the time of the budget announcement, De Beers Canada had already invested approximately \$1 billion in the construction of the Victor project, which was scheduled to start production in 2008.

The De Beers board and shareholders approved the Victor project budget based on current tax policies and tax regimes. With a \$7-billion economic footprint by the De Beers Victor project alone, the future of diamond exploration and mine development in Ontario is important in the prosperity of Ontario communities, but this government was so desperate for money, the first thing they did after Victor discovered diamonds and spent \$1 billion was invent a mining tax. If you wonder what's wrong up in the Ring of Fire, you can only imagine these three companies that have spent hundreds of millions of dollars are keeping awake at night wondering, "If we start to haul the chromite out of the Ring of Fire, what's to stop this government, with a proven track record, from developing a chromite tax?"

When the Liberals formed the government in 2003, Ontario was ranked number one in mining; today, we are number 16. Is it any wonder? This government brought in the Far North Act, which cuts off half of northern Ontario from exploration, and caused many companies to move out of Ontario.

Speaker, I have toured the camps in the Ring of Fire on four occasions now and must tell you that after five years, there's very little different there today than my first trip in 2011. In fact, there's less there today than there was all those years ago.

We've talked about high energy rates, we've talked about high taxes and future taxes of this Liberal Party, and I'm going to speak very quickly now on red tape or, as I prefer to call this part of it, death by a thousand paper cuts.

From filing taxes to applying for government permits, we have seen the Canadian Federation of Independent Business come out with their red tape analysis telling us that for families it costs us \$10 billion a year across Canada, and for businesses, \$31 billion across Canada. This red tape is crushing business and crushing non-profits alike.

As I mentioned when I first started, many of us in our PC caucus toured about 30 cities this year. Red tape was a very common theme, hearing it from business, but the biggest surprise was to hear it from social planning councils and poverty action groups, who would say, "We can't send our caseworkers to someone's house because they're busy filling out government forms."

In 1996, the Conservative government developed a Red Tape Commission to reduce red tape for small business and individuals. Sadly, the commission was discontinued by the Liberal government in 2003, and it's no wonder why we have death by a thousand paper cuts.

We heard a common theme throughout Ontario: skyrocketing energy rates, high taxes and crushing red tape. These are the three things that are killing Ontario's business.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak for 20 minutes about these job killers in Ontario, and I'll pass the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to have the opportunity to rise today in the House and to speak—I intended to speak to Bill 141. That was the program, the game plan. As a number of speakers alluded to, there was a schedule that was determined late last week, and we went forward with that. Our House leader and others had people prepared to come here today to speak to that. There's a lot of disappointment, as a number of members alluded to as well. Many years ago—longer than I want to think now—I was also a member of municipal council for my municipality, the great county of Lambton. I always, with other members, looked forward to attending ROMA-Good Roads, ROMA-OGRA, and interacting with my provincial member at the time, and there were a number of provincial members who were in the House at that time from different parties. But anyway, I know how much municipal representatives, whether they're mayors, councillors, reeves, or staff, look forward in coming to Toronto to the Royal York to that great conference for the opportunity of interacting.

1520

I've seen members from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry this morning having breakfast down in the lounge, downstairs in the dining room. Their member had them here for an early morning breakfast and then back down to the conference. I always enjoy attending the conference as well. I know that many members that are here today would have had to change their plans to come back to debate these two motions, that would have meetings scheduled with their members from their ridings. And also, they have conferences. There are displays that they like to attend. There's a lot of great business that's done there. It's unfortunate that those activities had to change.

I'd like to take the opportunity as well, as a number of members have spoken to a number of initiatives that I would have touched on in Bill 141. That's all right. I'll touch on them now in this opportunity under estimates.

The College of Trades was touched on by the member from Nipissing. He outlined that very well. That's a big impact in my riding. I've had hundreds of petitions presented in my riding from members who are impacted by this. They either work in unionized trades, non-union trades—barbers, a lot of hairdressers have signed. They feel this is a real imposition on their activities to make a living. They don't see any benefit to this. It's like a cash grab, a great hosing of the public, their wallets—go out and take more money. They talk about the trades police coming around and intimidating and calling on people to pay this money. There's a threat that if you're in arrears and you haven't paid, you're going to be on some website somewhere with your name showing that you're now suspended.

I've had a number of retired people say they have no intentions of ever going back to work—electricians, pipefitters, plumbers. They said, "Look, I've kept my trade up all my life. I've retired and I don't intend to work again, but I don't want my name on some website saying I'm in arrears, that I'm suspended." They take a real disagreement to that; they take utterance with that because they've maintained that trade all those years, and now that they think they've moved into their so-called golden years and they want to retire, some bureaucratic body here in Toronto, living in some golden palace down here downtown, which this \$120 per person is going to go to to maintain—now they're going to be called recalcitrant; they're going to be talked about as being in suspension or arrears, or whatever the word is. I've had a lot of people talk to me about that and come to my office.

There are the issues over hydro rates and energy rates. A number of people this year, especially with the price of propane spiking—and electricity rates are up. I've had numerous people call the office, and their issue is, it's between heating or eating. It's a sad fact. A number of them have called and said that their OAS, their pension, if they're retired—their energy bills are more than their OAS pension, so we're working with them on an ongoing basis in my office, and I'm sure many members from all three parties are doing the same.

These are some of the impacts of the policies that this government, over the last 11 years, has implemented. As the member from Nipissing said, it's the unintended consequences coming home to roost. We're going to have to address those things as whoever the next government is. They're going to be faced with these issues. There are going to be a lot of hard decisions to be made to try and right this great ship of state and get it back on the right track.

A number of issues that I would have liked to have seen and debated about earlier, if I would have talked about infrastructure under Bill 141, is the expansion of natural gas into rural Ontario. That's something that I think is a long time due, and I think the focus will be even greater on it this year because of this cold winter and with the number of people that had to heat with propane. Propane, as we all know, because of market supply etc., doubled over in price, and so a number of

people have no options. They either heat with oil or propane. Some people are on electricity. So, if we want to expand the rural economy, the farm economy where people can use—they need a source to dry their grain, corn etc.—the corn and wheat. They need access to something that's affordable. Natural gas is something that we have in plenty, especially because of the Marcellus shale that has been discovered.

There's a surplus of natural gas now in Ontario. I know that the energy companies—to speak of two that I'm most familiar with, Enbridge and Union; both have facilities in my riding—are certainly interested in working with the ratepayers, homeowners, the government at all three levels: municipal, provincial and federal. I think that's something we should seriously look at, and that's something I'm going to be pursuing.

I have a private member's bill before the House to do with LNG and transport. That's another issue I think is very important: the transportation industry. For the transportation, to keep the cost of food and other goods down, we need to look to move towards that. The industry is interested. There are private companies that are interested in installing the infrastructure. They're not looking for any money at all. They'd take it, but there's no money available. They're not looking for any kind of support in that regard from government. They're willing to do it. I hope that the members will take a look at that private member's bill of mine, and we'll move that forward. I'd like to get it into committee and debate it and talk about it all day long. I know that's where the economy is going. We're already doing those types of transportation fuels in Quebec, along their main corridor. If you look at a map of the lower 48 states, there are numerous facilities that have been installed there and other ones planned. The big, missing link is Ontario: 40% of the Canadian economy right here, a major opportunity along the 401 corridor. I call it the blue-ribbon highway. There's the opportunity to install these LNG facilities right along there. I know these companies are interested in doing this. There are companies that approach my office, outside of those two energy companies, willing to install that type of infrastructure. They're looking for guidance from us in this Legislature along those lines.

I would like to also talk about our million-jobs plan. We'll be debating that this Thursday, and I'm looking forward to that. We have a five-point plan in there, for those folks at home who haven't had an opportunity to see it. It calls for lower hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses and lower taxes; reins in government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years; promotes the skilled trades and lowers apprenticeship ratios; increases trade with provinces across Canada; and eliminates the red tape that forces small to medium-sized business owners to spend more and more time filling out paperwork instead of hiring

more employees. Unlike the Liberals and NDP, the PCs are the only party with a plan to create jobs, and that's our million-jobs plan.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity I had here today. Like I say, I came prepared to talk about Bill 141, which was supposed to be on the schedule, but I'm glad that I had the opportunity to speak about this and about the disappointment that our municipal colleagues, I know, are feeling at this time. We'll have to assuage them later today when we have an opportunity to see them and explain. We'll point out where the difficulties lie and where the problems arose in the first place, why we weren't able—a number of us who had appointments and were trying to make those appointments. We'll explain to them at the time where those shortcomings lie.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to close on that point and give the House the opportunity to move forward with the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a routine motion that we deal with every year in order to accept concurrence of the estimates that we've done in the Legislature and the estimates committee, one of the committees of this Legislature—fairly routine, normally done by voice. I don't see any particular need to prolong this debate because we have all our ROMA convention delegates who are there waiting for us, and I would hope that we can get there sooner rather than later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply, government orders 11 through 21 inclusive. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, this vote is deferred to deferred votes tomorrow, February 25, 2014.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1530.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
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Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
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Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
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**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 25 February 2014

Mardi 25 février 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 February 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Mr. Coteau moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 161, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to stand before the House today to speak in regard to our proposed legislation, the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 161. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this piece of legislation will start a new chapter in the province of Ontario. I think it's the right time for this type of legislation and I think it's critical for what we're doing here in the province of Ontario. So I want to take an opportunity to talk about why I believe this piece of legislation, this proposed legislation, is critical to Ontario, but also I want to take an opportunity to respond a bit to my critics from the opposition and the third party. They made some remarks last week and I just wanted to bring some insight into those remarks. But first I'll talk about why this bill is critical for the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we have some challenges when it comes to our birth rate in the province of Ontario, but we also know that we have an aging population; our baby boomers are retiring. We know that new sectors are being developed all the time, new technologies are being brought in, and there's a skills shortage when it comes to specific skills in the province of Ontario. We also know that over the next 10 years there will be 2.5 million job openings in the province of Ontario, and the majority of those positions will be highly skilled positions. Over the next 25 years immigration is going to be the major source of market growth in the province of Ontario. The simple fact is that immigration is critical to our economy. We need to ensure that we continue to attract the best and

brightest from around the world. We also need to make sure we put in place the right type of educational programs so we can respond to that labour market need, that we offer retraining. But we do know that immigration will play a part in building a strong economy here in the province of Ontario, so it is critical.

But we also know that immigration, Mr. Speaker, has played such a huge role in the development of this province. If we think about our past, Ontario's past—I know that the Premier says this all the time—outside of our aboriginal population, every single person in this province has some type of immigrant past. It could be two weeks ago; it could be 200 years ago, but there's a strong connection with immigration here in the province of Ontario. In fact, I know many of the members here in this Legislature were born outside the province or country. Mr. Speaker, I was born outside of Canada. I came here as a young man from England. My father went from Grenada to England, and we benefited off of what Canada had to offer, what Ontario has to offer.

Being in this position as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I feel so proud when I get to meet newcomers here in the province of Ontario—and I get to meet them all the time. I ask them, "Why have you chosen Ontario as your destination?" Because I'm curious to hear what the answer is. Often, I hear words like "freedom"; I hear words like "opportunity"; I hear words like "success." "I can find success for me and my family." And I believe without question that if you work hard in this province, you can take advantage of those opportunities that are here and you can find success for yourself and your family.

I think Ontario is a unique place. The member from Oakville, Mr. Flynn—a few months ago, I was at an event with him. He said that Ontario is unique. He said that never in the history of the world has a place like Ontario existed, and I think that's true because you look around and we know there are so many different cultures. In fact, there are over 200 different cultures, and we have over 250 languages that are spoken here in the province of Ontario.

So it is my honour to bring forward this proposed legislation, Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act, as a newcomer to Canada myself, from a newcomer family, and as a member of this Legislature, but I think most importantly as an Ontarian, because I believe this piece of legislation is coming at the right time for Ontario.

If this proposed legislation passes, it will do a few things. It will affirm our commitment to settlement and integration programs here in the province of Ontario. It

will strengthen our role in immigrant selection in the province of Ontario, which I think is so critical, especially for trying to fill those skill gaps that exist. It will also support the implementation of our immigration strategy, which was brought forward by my predecessor, now the Minister of Finance, and the PA for children and youth services, because I know she played a huge role in the consultation process. But this immigration strategy is key to making sure that Ontario continues to move forward.

I want to take a few moments to talk about our settlement programs here in the province of Ontario. I think that this piece of proposed legislation is key to ensuring that these important and critical programs that we have here in Ontario are recognized and enabled, for the first time, through legislation. If this legislation does pass, it will enable and recognize those programs that we have here, that exist in the province of Ontario. And I have to say that the programs that are offered in the province, settlement services for newcomers, are the best, I believe, in this entire country, and they're the envy of many countries around the world. In fact, I've had other countries come here to talk about these programs because they always say to us, "How does Ontario do it so well?" It's because of those settlement services and those programs that we have here in the province of Ontario.

My critic the member from Beaches–East York last week stood in the House and said that our programs are not the way they used to be back—I guess back years ago. He said that there has been a decline in the services that we offer, and he talked about a program at the airport where people come in and get information. I have to say that the settlement services in the province of Ontario are extraordinary. I get to go out there and meet these different programs all the time, and there's no question that these programs are world-class.

In fact, if you talk about, for example, our bridge training program, our bridge training program, over the last several years, has successfully had over 50,000 people graduate from the program, and these are foreign-trained professionals who come into the province of Ontario. We want to figure out how we can fast-track them as fast as possible so they can get their credentials and they can continue to work in the field that they've been trained to do. We've had over 50,000 people go through these courses over the last several years.

If you look at our other programs, our French- and English-as-second-language programs, we currently have over 100,000 people across the province enrolled in those courses. Our programs are a bit different from the federal programs because you don't have to—it doesn't matter if you're a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident. Everyone qualifies for those programs because we even know that when sometimes people come into the province of Ontario—I met a gentleman, for example, a few weeks ago, who was born in Ontario, and went to Greece his whole life. He came back and had difficulty with English. He qualified for our courses. The federal program doesn't allow people who have their Canadian citizenship to take the courses. We have an open approach to our ESL and

FSL language courses here in the province of Ontario, and they're right across the province of Ontario. The rule for us is, if you can show that you have capacity to deliver the course and you have the demand for it, we will fund those courses.

0910

Since 2003, this government has invested over \$900 million into settlement and immigrant services here in the province of Ontario, and I think that's important. I think that the member from Beaches–East York has to recognize that this is, I would argue, probably the largest commitment of any government in the history of Ontario when it comes to investment in our settlement programs and services.

Madam Speaker, if the legislation does pass, it will also do another thing. It will allow us to have a little bit more control over our selection process here in the province of Ontario. I want to take an opportunity to talk about Ontario and the current numbers. I know the member from Prince Edward–Hastings last week talked about Ontario. He says there's more opportunities, I believe, in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and other places than there are in Ontario. He also said that "Ontario used to be the number one destination for newcomers to Canada." I'm going to read that one more time. He said that "Ontario used to be the number one destination for newcomers to Canada." Well, I want to correct—well, I can't correct his record, but I want to just point out to the member opposite that Ontario remains the number one destination in Canada for newcomers. It remains the number one destination. In fact, if you take all the newcomers west of Ontario, so you take all the provinces and you add them up, it doesn't even equal what Ontario attracts. The fact is that there is opportunity here in the province of Ontario. It's a great time to be in the province of Ontario, and that's why newcomers are choosing Ontario and it remains the number one destination in the country for newcomers. I think that's important to say.

There are some challenges that we do have, though, when it comes to the newcomers that are coming into Ontario. Back in 2001, we attracted roughly in the mid-60s when it came to the economic class of newcomers here in the province of Ontario. Currently that number has dropped, and it's dropped substantially, and that's because of federal policy. So we need to have a better ability to select newcomers into the province of Ontario, like other provinces have. We know that there are other provinces that have selection up to 34%. In Ontario, it's well below 2%; it remains below 2% in self-selection. We know that if the province has more selection power, we can work with our municipalities. We can work with companies and businesses to ensure that we continue to attract the best and brightest with those specific skills necessary to fill in those positions we can't find people to fill in Ontario, to ensure that our economy continues to grow. We are currently at 50%. We were in the mid-60s back in 2001. Here's an interesting point: Saskatchewan and Manitoba's economic-class percentages are at 87% and 77%, and the Canadian average of 70%. So there's

an issue here: Ontario is not getting its fair share of economic-class newcomers into the province of Ontario, and other provinces are getting an average of 70% and as high as 87%.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, my critic from the Progressive Conservative Party, made some observations last week that I believe were inaccurate, and I need to set the record straight. I need to set the record straight because the numbers are here, and I think the member from Prince Edward–Hastings needs to listen to these points. He claimed that our provincial nominee program attracts people into the province and then they leave. They leave and they go to other provinces out west.

Madam Speaker, 98% of our PNP nominees that come into Ontario remain in Ontario—98%. They don't pick up their bags, land in Ontario, pick up their bags and move out west. It's not true; it's simply not true. They remain in the province of Ontario because there is opportunity in Ontario. I think it's a great time to be in Ontario. I think there's a bright economic future in Ontario and I think that the PNP numbers speak the truth: 98% of our provincial nominee candidates that arrive here remain in Ontario. And we know that 95% of the employers that access this program are so satisfied; 95% are satisfied with the individuals that come over to fill those positions that are very highly skilled. So it's almost a perfect record—98%. I think we in the Legislature should be proud, regardless of what party we belong to. We retain 98% of our provincial nominee candidates here in the province of Ontario, and we know that the provincial nominee program helps employers attract and retain the skills they need for today's knowledge-based economy. I think that's important. We can say that PNP is a successful program here in the province of Ontario.

I want to give a few examples of the success that has taken place. In the last few years, 25 hospitals have accessed our provincial nominee programs to attract the right type of doctors or medical professionals they need in their communities to ensure Ontarians continue to live in a place where they can access good health care. Also, half of our universities in the province of Ontario have accessed the program in order to attract the right type of professors and university personnel to ensure in our province that when a young person or an adult decides to go to post-secondary education, they can continue to receive a world-class education. In addition, since 2009, our provincial nominee program here in the province of Ontario has brought in half a billion dollars in actual investment and has created thousands of jobs. So there is no question that our provincial nominee program is a successful program.

In addition to that, I believe roughly 65% of the applicants who are successful come here to study either at a master's or a PhD level. So we're attracting the best and brightest from around the world, who go through a competitive process in order to gain citizenship in this province. They come in through this academic stream, and we think it's very successful to attract the best and brightest,

but also to add to our economy, because we know that our international students contribute a lot to our economy here in the province of Ontario.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings said something interesting last week. He said that the federal government is not growing our numbers in the PNP because of a lack of confidence, I believe it was, in our ability to manage the program and make best use of it. Since I became Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and utilizing the hard work and dedication of my predecessors, the Minister of Tourism and Culture, as well as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Trade and Development, to be able to really push forward on the agenda that they set, we went from 1,000 PNP numbers when I started—last year, we were allocated 1,300. I'm pleased to announce today—and I'm not sure if everyone knows—that we're at 2,500 PNP. So if the member opposite believes that our provincial nominee numbers are not going up because there's a lack of confidence—well, if we've gone up, what, 150% in the last year, I think that's the best vote of confidence we could ever have from my federal counterpart and the federal government. I think this is an extraordinary time for Ontario and I think we should be very proud of the fact that we've been able to, through our advocacy and through our ability to continue to bring forward an argument that suggests Ontario needs its fair share of economic-class immigrants in the province of Ontario—you need to bring us up to the same number that you're allocating to provinces like Alberta. We're at 2,500 from 1,000, but we still need those numbers to go up. We need to be above the 5,000 mark in order to best position Ontario for success.

0920

I think that the provincial nominee program is one of those programs that—we will be able to, if this legislation passes, have a framework in order to enable it to even work better, especially as the Expression of Interest model is moved forward by Ottawa. We're told that in January 2015, the Expression of Interest model will come forward here in Canada and Ontario, and we need to make sure that we have a framework put in place that allows us to participate more in the selection process of newcomers, so we can continue to help our municipalities, our businesses and, most importantly, our society here in the province of Ontario.

This bill, this legislation, if passed, will bring forward more transparency and accountability, and it will allow us to continue to expand. It would also, Madam Speaker, prevent fraud by improving compliance and enforcement measures within our selection process. I think this is something we need to do in order to prepare ourselves for the Expression of Interest model. If we can put in this process, prevent potential fraud and introduce penalties for applicants who misrepresent themselves, and for those who take advantage of newcomers—I know that the member from Beaches–East York said, “Why is there such a heavy focus on penalties for fraud?” I know he said that it was about half of a percentage of fraud that's

committed in Canada. I believe that's what he said. I know that we attract about 250,000 newcomers to Canada each year, so that would be roughly 1,200 people, based on his number, that are actually committing fraud. We need to make sure that there's an accountable system put in place if the Expression of Interest model is brought forward based on the Australia and New Zealand model. We need to make sure that if the federal government decides to move in this direction, Ontario is prepared to further participate in the selection process of newcomers here in the province of Ontario.

In conclusion, I just want to say that we are quite proud here, on this side of the House, for the Legislature and for our members here to debate this proposed legislation. I believe that Bill 161, if passed, is the right thing to do at the right time for Ontario. If you look at our past and you look at the history of this province, immigration has played a huge role in its development and will continue to do so. We need to make sure that we have in place the tools that government can use to continue to attract the best and brightest from around the world, to continue to build a province built on fairness, built on compassion, built on opportunity, so people can find success. And we need to make sure, Madam Speaker, that we build an Ontario that continues to capture the values that make us, I think, different from many jurisdictions around the world, and that's our strong education system, our strong health care system here in the province of Ontario. I think that by moving forward on this piece of legislation, we will have the ability to do just that.

I look forward to hearing the debate in this Legislature, and I just want to end by saying that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to stand and respond. I will have an hour-long presentation on Bill 161 in just a few moments, but I just wanted to touch on some of the comments from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Congratulations on your first piece of legislation since being named minister. We've been waiting for this. You got through 20 minutes or so, and we look forward to adding some comments to the comments that you made this morning.

There's no doubt that Ontario still is a destination of choice for people from around the world, Madam Speaker. But we've seen the numbers of new immigrants declining in Ontario. That's a fact; it's a simple fact. I'll go over some of the numbers when I have a little more time to elaborate on those numbers. But the simple fact is, not as many people are coming to Ontario as there once was, and there is a big reason for that. The big reason for that is because Ontario is not the land of opportunity anymore. The member opposite, the minister, spoke about the fact that when he moved to Ontario this was the land of opportunity. This was a place where people wanted to come. There was going to be hope and there was going to be freedom, and he mentioned another

bunch of important words. Ontario isn't the symbol of those words any longer. Under the last 10 years, we have seen the opportunity in Ontario dissipating. It's just a fact. Unemployment is rising. Taxes are rising, and they want to continue raising taxes. People from around the world are doing their homework. They're looking at the numbers and they're saying, "There's a better opportunity in other jurisdictions for me to raise my family than there is in Ontario." Just the simple facts, Madam Speaker, and I'll elaborate later.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It actually is a pleasure to stand up and talk a little bit and respond to some of the comments from the minister with regard to Bill 161. This is a step in the right direction, and it is long overdue. We welcome this because we share the principled position that immigration is an important part of the culture, the history and the economy of this province. There's a lot of work, though, that we can move forward on. There are some things that we'll be addressing, I think, in committee; certainly, the fact that this bill does not address the long-standing problem of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional field.

When the former Premier of this province came to Kitchener—Waterloo, which is the fourth-largest draw for immigrants and refugees in the province, he said, to a packed house—this is some 10 years ago—"Listen, I know that there are doctors in this room who are driving cabs, and we're going to get that taken care of." This has been a long-standing issue. Hopefully, now that we have a piece of legislation that we can work with, we can actually make sure that people who come to this country and come to this province, who have skills that are needed, actually can apply those skills in their respective fields.

The other part of this bill that is missing, and this is something that I know OCASI feels strongly about, is that the bill recognizes municipalities and employers as important partners but is silent on the role of the community-based non-profit immigrant and refugee serving sector. I've served on Reception House in Kitchener—Waterloo for the last four years. They do important work. They're on the front lines. They know their communities best, and it is a missed opportunity if we do not make sure those not-for-profit agencies are part of the solution going forward. Those are two issues that we see as problematic, but they can be solved, and we're willing to do the hard work to get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'm proud to rise this morning to support my colleague with respect to Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act, as he has indicated. When I was the parliamentary assistant at MCI, I led, I facilitated a number of consultations across the province. Through those consultations, Madam Speaker, we spoke to hundreds of people across the province. We spoke with newcomers, we spoke with agencies, and we spoke with

industry and business to really provide the backbone in terms of what we're seeing come forward in this immigration act today, so I'm very excited and proud to have been part of that process.

The reason I'm proud of being part of that process is twofold. One is that, prior to being elected, I was very active in our community with our local immigration planning committee. That was where agencies came together, and we came forward with recommendations in terms of how to strengthen our services and ensure that all newcomers that came into our community, that came into this province, had the supports that they required to be successful. I'm proud to say that in Ontario we have a fantastic system of agencies, of groups, of educators and health care that really supports our newcomers. The other element is that although I was born in Ontario, my parents came here from Italy. I grew up listening to their stories of why they came to Ontario, why it was important for all of us to work together to ensure that we all have a successful future. It doesn't matter where we come from when we come to Ontario—we all have a future here, and in order to have that success we need to have the programs and services that support them.

I work quite often and I visit quite often with all our agencies in Windsor, including women's economic skills training, W5, our Multicultural Council, our newcomer centre of excellence as well, and we celebrate our diversity. We celebrate our diversity and we ensure that we're working together in partnership to ensure that we can move forward. This act does that. It ensures that we have all our programs and services in place so that we can be the best place and everyone can succeed in Ontario. Thank you.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's my pleasure to stand and just briefly address Bill 161, the act with respect to immigration in Ontario.

Speaker, in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, I recall back to about two and a half years ago, when I was getting to know the people of Leamington. Leamington is a very diverse, strong, rich-in-culture community. But, unfortunately, it's been hard hit. Now, when I say "rich in culture," there's a strong Italian base there, a strong Portuguese base there, and of course there are other people who have immigrated into that town. And there was a reason why they came, years ago: because Ontario was what I would call the land of milk and honey. Unfortunately, the milk has soured and the honey has gotten hard.

Unfortunately, we look at the current situation right now and, of course, we see what the federal government is trying to do and wanting to do and needing to do. Speaker, I look at this and I go—Ontario is not going to get its share of provincial nominee spots until it decides to get the economy back on track. Our party does, in fact, have a plan to do that, to get things back in order, because we look at how this economy has been slapped

around constantly over the last 10, 11 years, where the debt has more than doubled from when this government came into being back in 2003.

Again, will we support this? Yes, we will. We will support this. But there are things that need to be looked at more strongly to strengthen this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex for weighing in on the introduction of the second reading of this bill.

I just wanted to say that, yes, our share of newcomers here in the province of Ontario has gone from about 135,000 to about 100,000 over the last several years. It is true, and I agree with the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. This is exactly why we brought forward the immigration strategy to the province of Ontario: to tell the federal government, who have control of who comes into the province of Ontario—they control the flow of newcomers in the country. We need to unite and we need to drop our partisan divides. We need to unite and stand up and tell the federal government that Ontario needs its fair share of PNP spots, of skilled workers, economic-class workers and newcomers here to the province of Ontario and our fair share of newcomers as a whole. We need to get back to our number of 135,000. I hope that the members from the Progressive Conservative Party and the members from the NDP will stand with me and this government to ensure that the federal government allows this province to chart its course when it comes to immigrant selection, but also put in place the tools necessary, through our programs that we work with them to develop and to implement and to run, so we can continue to build an Ontario that we've all benefited from.

I'm proud to stand here and participate in this debate, and I look forward to all the comments from all members in this House, because I know it's an issue that matters to every single person here. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning. It is a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

This bill is not a bad bill, Madam Speaker. It's not a bad bill. Actually, as a matter of fact, there are probably some good things in this bill—

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: That's the largest ovation I've ever received here, from that side of the House anyway.

Bill 161, though, is another indication of this government putting the cart before the horse. What needs to happen first is, there need to be some fundamental changes in the province of Ontario. We'll get to those eventually. I've got lots of time here to talk about this.

But first of all I would like to say that, over the last five months or so, it's been an honour and a pleasure for

me to be the critic for citizenship and immigration for Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus, travelling into the different multicultural communities in the greater Toronto area in particular, but right across the province. There are so many rich communities out there that provide such tremendous culture to our province. They've made so many contributions, not just to the culture of the province but to the academics of the province, to the economy in the province, and it has been a wonderful experience for me as a young guy who grew up in New Brunswick—not the most multicultural province in Canada—to come here to Ontario.

I live, of course, in the Belleville area, in Sterling, in Prince Edward–Hastings, but to come into the greater Toronto area, where the majority of newcomers to Canada do call home, and to experience the Vaisakhi in the Brampton area or in Mississauga; to experience Diwali—it's a wonderful time; great celebrations, tremendous food, of course, which I like. Then, to spend lunar new year, Chinese new year in the communities, mostly in Richmond Hill and Markham, over the last several months and celebrate the new year—of course, 2014 is the year of the horse, Madam Speaker—spending time in those communities understanding the issues that these people are facing in their communities, and then bringing their issues here to Queen's Park. We celebrated Thai Pongal in the Tamil community back in January—the Tamil new year. It was a wonderful time to celebrate with them and another growing community within Ontario. So I've experienced many new holidays and celebrations in these communities that I had never experienced before, and it has been a wonderful experience for me on behalf of our party to represent our caucus at these various events.

As I mentioned, I moved to Ontario over 20 years ago now from New Brunswick. The reason that I moved from New Brunswick to Ontario was because, at that time, New Brunswick was a rather depressed area. There was not a lot of opportunity. I love the Maritimes—it's a great place to visit in the summer, Madam Speaker, if you get the opportunity—but there was going to be a far better chance of me finding full-time employment in my chosen field here in Ontario than there was in New Brunswick.

In those days, New Brunswick, as I say, wasn't doing all that well. Ontario was the engine of Confederation, Ontario was where the opportunity was and Ontario was where you wanted to move if you wanted to make your mark. I was a young broadcast journalist, and, of course, Ontario is where the majority of the people in Canada live, as well, so I'm not telling you anything you don't know, but there was a lot more opportunity here in Ontario than there was in New Brunswick at the time.

So I came here. I was educated in Belleville at Loyalist College, in the broadcast journalism program there, and quickly caught on a position with Quinte Broadcasting radio stations. Now I have, of course, a beautiful wife, and two children in Ontario that are in school at Bayside and doing extremely well and taking French immersion. I'm doing everything that a young guy from

New Brunswick had envisioned when he moved here. I didn't actually envision being an MPP at Queen's Park when I moved to Ontario, but here I am, and I'm happy to be here and proud to be representing the people of Prince Edward–Hastings in the Legislature.

As the minister alluded to earlier, he and his family moved here from England. I know his father is from Grenada. His family is from Grenada, and they live the Ontario dream as well, as so many people in this Legislature actually have and as so many people in this province have.

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But the Ontario that we moved to 20 years ago, 15 years ago, 10 years ago has whittled away. It has been whittled away over time. We've seen that opportunity disappear, and when I'm talking to people in Brampton or Mississauga or Scarborough or Richmond Hill or Markham or even in Prince Edward–Hastings, where I'm from, they all come to the same conclusion: There's just not as much opportunity out there. They're worried now that their children aren't going to have the opportunities that they had when they decided to move to Ontario.

Unemployment is significantly high in Ontario. As a matter of fact, I believe the number is 80 months now—correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe it's 80 months, that unemployment in Ontario has been higher than the national average. The economy isn't exactly ticking at full speed, Madam Speaker. I think there are many, many reasons for that, and I think the chief reason for that is because the government isn't doing a good enough job at making sure that we're creating jobs in the province of Ontario. Driving up debt with multi-billion-dollar deficits year after year is making Ontario a lacklustre destination for investors in our province.

People look at the fundamentals of a province before deciding whether to invest here or whether to move here, and people are doing their homework now. I mean, 20 years ago when I moved here, I don't even think I knew what an Internet was, but we live now in such a small world that if you're deciding to come here from India—in speaking of Canada—if you're deciding to locate, you're now able to do your homework. Everything is available at the flick of a switch, on your keyboard, and—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: The Minister of Labour says, “Yes, they're coming to Ontario.” But they're not coming to Ontario in the numbers that they once were, Madam Speaker. They're not, and that's the fact. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration admitted as much just a moment ago, that the numbers have significantly dropped, and there's a reason for that. The reason is, they're doing their homework and they're understanding that the opportunity that once existed here in Ontario doesn't exist in the same way any longer, and there are a lot of things that have to happen. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has talked about his Million Jobs Act and the fact that we have to start creating jobs again in the province.

We have not seen a single jobs plan from the government, but yet we have this piece of legislation—and this

is where I go back to the fact that we've put the cart before the horse when it comes to this piece of legislation. Bill 161 is a fine piece of legislation, but it's too early. We have to have a jobs plan. We have to start creating jobs in the province, and what we've seen is jobs disappearing at a record pace from Ontario. My colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex just talked moments ago about what's happened in Leamington. Heinz ketchup was in Leamington for over 100 years. It was an opportunity, as my colleague mentioned, where people immigrated into Canada and they would work at the Heinz ketchup factory in Leamington. They would grow the tomatoes and send them on to the factory. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people worked at Heinz ketchup in Leamington. The fact of the matter is that we're still making ketchup in the world. People are still putting ketchup on their french fries and on their Kraft Dinner—my kids have it on their Kraft Dinner; I don't quite like that but they're having it on their Kraft Dinner. They're having it on their hamburgers. Right? That ketchup is still being made, but the ketchup isn't being made in Leamington any longer; that ketchup is being made in the United States.

This is what's happening. Our jobs aren't disappearing; they're just disappearing from Ontario, because we're not the location of choice for investors any longer, and there are many, many reasons for that. There's the high debt and the high deficit that this government continues to put on the table. We'll look forward to seeing what happens at budget time in about a month or so here, Madam Speaker, to see if those blank spots that are in the budget ledger for the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 are actually filled in this time. They talk about the fact that they want to balance the budget, but they have absolutely no plan to do that. And until we start to get our finances under control, investors like Heinz and many others are going to decide to locate elsewhere.

We haven't even touched on the high cost of electricity, the rising and soaring cost of electricity, and what that means for investors in our province as well. I represent the Quinte area. I meet with the Quinte Manufacturers Association on a quarterly basis, but I hear from them a heck of a lot more than that, Madam Speaker, because every day they're contacting my office, talking about the rising cost of electricity. As a matter of fact, yesterday I had a meeting on the telephone with the general manager of a manufacturing facility in Belleville. He told me his global adjustment last month on his hydro bill was \$2,100. That's a number that didn't exist—and that's a small manufacturing facility. There are much larger manufacturing facilities that have seen huge increases on their hydro bills. This is the biggest concern right now in rural Ontario, and I know it's a concern here in the GTA with our manufacturers as well: the rising cost of electricity.

I've mentioned many times here about Sigma Stretch Film in Belleville. Two and a half years ago, their hydro bill was \$131,000 a month. That's a lot of money, \$131,000 a month. In December of this year, their hydro

bill was \$240,000, and according to the Liberals' long-term energy plan, by the time 2015 hits, that hydro bill is going to be \$461,000 a month. That's up from \$131,000. These are—

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I know that we're talking about the Ontario Immigration Act, and he's focusing entirely on electricity. I think the member should return back to Bill 161.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just remind the member to remember that it is Bill 161. Thank you.

Mr. Todd Smith: Sure. And again, Madam Speaker, I'm happy to talk about the bill. I have 47 minutes remaining, and I will of course get to the bill, but I'm trying to paint a larger picture as to why investors aren't creating jobs in Ontario, which of course makes it very difficult for newcomers to come to Ontario, if there are no jobs here in Ontario or if jobs are disappearing at a record pace. So I can appreciate that the minister would like me to talk to the bill, and I will be talking to the bill, but again, I'm just trying to relay that we are in a very dire situation in Ontario, and we have a government that doesn't seem to realize that we're in a desperate situation here. We need to make some changes, and we need to implement the Million Jobs Act that our leader, Tim Hudak, has been talking about in order for us to attract newcomers at the pace that we need to attract newcomers to Ontario.

As the minister mentioned in his remarks, we need to bring in skilled workers. We all understand that we need to bring in skilled employees to fill the job shortages that we're about to face down the road, and I think the number that he mentioned was 2.5 million job openings in the coming years. So we all recognize the fact that we do have some challenges in Ontario, and one challenge that I think the minister mentioned was the low birth rate, but we have many, many challenges that are far more important and significant than that.

We need to create an environment where investors want to create jobs here in Ontario, and we need to create an environment such that newcomers will want to come and begin their new lives here in Ontario and not choose Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba or British Columbia.

I do have a few numbers, and I will speak specifically to some of the numbers in regard to other provinces. I'm just trying to find them here, Madam Speaker. I apologize.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Take your time, Todd.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I have lots of time, I understand.

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Provinces like Manitoba and Saskatchewan have seen their immigration rates double and triple, respectively. Manitoba and Saskatchewan—and by no means do I mean to run down other provinces, but Manitoba and Saskatchewan weren't high on the list of destinations for people from around the world to locate to. There's a rea-

son why those numbers are significantly higher in those two provinces right now. If you look at Saskatchewan in particular, there's a province that has its act together. There's no such thing as unemployment in Saskatchewan. People in Saskatchewan have good jobs now. They know that when they wake up in the morning, they're going to be able to go to work. There's no such thing as unemployment in Saskatchewan—low single digits in unemployment, if there is any.

They've done such a good job in Saskatchewan at creating an environment where people want to come. They actually did have some wonderful commercials on during the Olympic Games. It is probably a very nice place to visit and to raise a family now because there is that opportunity.

So many people are choosing other provinces now, like Manitoba and Saskatchewan, who have taken advantage of the provincial nominee program. When you look at what the feds have done—they allocate the provincial nominees program spaces—they're looking at the job creation opportunities, they're looking at what's happening in those other provinces and so they're allocating increased numbers there.

While Ontario has seen some increase in provincial nominee program numbers, we believe that, yes, we need to have more spaces in the provincial nominee program, which is a sponsorship program where people come here and are guaranteed to have a job when they get here in their chosen field. We believe that there do need to be more provincial nominee program spaces here in Ontario, and we look forward to the day when we actually have the investors and the businesses here in Ontario that want to create those opportunities and fill those opportunities.

The federal government has made multiple extensive changes to the immigration system here in Canada over the last decade, including the federal skilled worker program, the provincial nominee program, and others like the Canadian experience class. It's a good program as well, where we attract newcomers here. They can come, study in our schools and then eventually receive permanent status here in Ontario. These are all good programs, but again I go back to the fact that if we don't get the fundamentals right here in Ontario, then we're not going to attract those people to our province.

I've been talking to an awful lot of people in the Brampton and Mississauga areas, and even home in Prince Edward-Hastings, about credentials. This is an issue that I believe needs to be addressed as well in Ontario. A few weeks back—I guess it was just before Christmas—I was having some small business round tables. I was previously the small business critic for the PC caucus, and the red tape critic, so I have had small business and red tape meetings right across the province and met with many people. With the citizenship and immigration file, it has been interesting to also hear the same things within the communities of our newcomers and our new Canadians. They're dealing with the same things. They're dealing with red tape issues, and credentials are a big part of that.

Let me tell you a quick story about two gentlemen I was speaking with at a real estate office in Brampton just before Christmas. They were both foreign-trained doctors. Neither of them was working in a hospital or in our health care system. As a matter of fact, I believe one of them was a security guard and the other was a taxi driver—just doing whatever job they could do to make ends meet. They told me that when they were doing their homework and deciding where they were going to relocate here in Canada, they decided—this was many years ago now—to come to Ontario because this was where they were going to be able to get a job and work in their chosen field. The way that one of the gentlemen put it to me was, when he left India on the airplane, he had his credentials. He was going to be able to get a job when he landed here. But when he actually hit the airport up in Mississauga, Lester B. Pearson international airport, he became a zero. These are his words. He said, "I became a zero when I landed at Pearson." He was unable to get a job. This, in a province where we've had some serious physician shortages, especially in some of our more rural areas. He wants to work in his field. It's not like he was working in MASH unit somewhere. He was working at a fully functional and modern, up-to-date hospital in India, with really impressive credentials and experience—20 years' experience working in all different kinds of situations. He wants to work here and contribute to our health care system. When he landed he couldn't get that opportunity.

He got the red tape runaround, the bureaucratic runaround. He did a test. He passed his examinations, but he was unable to get a job in the field. He told me that he'd be willing to work as an apprentice, even, to a fully trained medical practitioner here in Ontario, be it in Thunder Bay or Kirkland Lake or here in the GTA, wherever the opportunity would arise, in order to prove that he knew his profession, that he would be able to provide a service here in Ontario in a field where we could actually use some help and some experience. But he continues to get the runaround.

We need to have an Ontario government that will address that red tape runaround. Treat this as a situation where we want to give our newcomers an opportunity to show us that they can contribute in a positive way to our health care system. They were willing to do anything, these guys: to work in a lab, to work in a family health team setting, to work anywhere in our medical field to get some experience and to prove themselves so that they could be a medical professional here in Ontario, but they're not being given that opportunity.

There's a young lady, actually, whom I met with last summer. She's from the Bancroft area, at the northern end of my riding. She decided that she would go to medical school over in Scotland. She's a fully trained, fully qualified pediatrician in Scotland, but she wants to work at home. She wants to work here in Ontario. Her family is in Bancroft. They have a beautiful home next to the golf course, and Jennifer would love to come back and work at the North Hastings Hospital in Bancroft or

Quinte Health Care hospitals in Belleville or Trenton or Prince Edward county. But she's being denied residency here in Ontario because there are not enough slots here.

We have a pediatrician shortage in eastern Ontario. I can tell you that there needs to be a pediatrician on call 24 hours a day. What's been happening in Belleville, at Belleville General Hospital periodically, is, because we don't have enough pediatricians, babies who are being born at the maternity ward of Belleville General Hospital—brand new babies, just welcomed into the world—are being put in an ambulance and sent to Kingston General Hospital because there's a pediatrician there. The families are actually getting in their cars and driving to Kingston, which is an hour away, to be with their brand new family member. And then when a pediatrician comes on call, the baby is being put back in the ambulance and sent back to Belleville General Hospital. These are the kinds of things that are costing enormous amounts of money, for one, and creating unfortunate situations for families in Ontario at what should be a very celebratory time. It's a huge problem.

We have a pediatrician who's from the Quinte region, who is from Prince Edward-Hastings, who would love to come back and work in their hometown hospital, but they're not getting that opportunity because of the red tape runaround, because of bureaucracy, because of a credentialing system that doesn't work. So that's something that we could potentially look at when we discuss this bill in committee as well: giving those who have the credentials in another country an opportunity to work in their chosen field here in Ontario. That's not just medical practitioners; it's electrical engineers, it's—you name it. People are unable to get into their chosen field here in Ontario. We need to fix that, Madam Speaker.

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But again, I go back to the fact that if we pass this bill—and I'm sure this bill will eventually make it to committee and will get support; there will be amendments, of course, to this bill—there are not going to be the desired outcomes from this bill, because the province needs to get its financial situation in order.

We decided—when I say “we,” our party and our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus—back in November and December that we would pass a number of bills that the government wanted passed so that we could see a jobs plan from this government. We had a number of very good bills that were passed, some excellent bills, as a matter of fact: Sikh Heritage Month was passed, First Responders Day was passed, and we had the tanning bed bill for teenagers passed. There were many, many bills that we allowed swift passage to in the Legislature so that we could get to a jobs plan here in Ontario, so that we could make sure that we were addressing the financial crisis that we're in here in Ontario. And when you're looking at a debt that's approaching \$300 billion, this is something that needs to be fixed in order for Ontario to be seen as a desirable location for investment, and we haven't seen that. We haven't seen a government that is taking a laser-like focus to eliminate the deficit in the

province; we've actually seen a government that's looking at introducing future taxes in Ontario, which is going to make us an even less desirable location.

They're talking about bringing in a 10-cent-per-litre increase in the gas tax. What's that going to do to our small businesses, our manufacturers? It's going to make it more expensive for them again to do business here in Ontario—increasing the gas tax. We already know the electricity prices are going through the roof. Our propane prices are up almost triple in the last several months, particularly in eastern Ontario, and there are many people in my region who are dealing with propane that was once at about 50 cents a litre, now at \$1.12 a litre, and it's causing huge hardships on homeowners and residents in eastern Ontario.

It goes back to what I've been saying from the outset, that unless we get our fundamentals in place to make Ontario a desired location for investment, for newcomers to call home, then we're not going to get the numbers that we need to fill the vacancies that the minister was talking about during his presentation: 2.5 million job openings in the coming years.

We need to make changes in our education policy as well and our curriculum so that we're actually training our students for the jobs that are available—people without jobs, jobs without people. But we have to be training people for those job vacancies, and we have to be sure that we're giving them the skills that they need when they're in elementary school, public school and right up through in their post-secondary education so that when they do have an opportunity to join the workforce, they're actually trained for the jobs that are available at that time. We're not doing a good enough job. When you look at the math test results that we had from the EQAO that were recently released, we're not doing a good enough job in financial literacy and in improving our math scores. We need to do a much better job to ensure that when the jobs are available we're actually training our students to fill those job vacancies.

The federal government is encouraging provinces to develop systems that will allow for them to participate in the Expression of Interest program after 2015. The feds are going to be introducing Expression of Interest immigration reform to make the immigration system much more responsive to labour market demands. The minister has touched on that as well in the legislation that's coming forward. Again, this legislation is good legislation, Madam Speaker. There are some very good points throughout this that we commend, but again, it's just a situation where the province is a little bit too quick to put these in place without addressing some of the larger things that we need to address in the province.

We're not matching our immigration to our labour needs. We need to do a better job of doing that. It's merely allowing new immigrants to settle here based on a set of credentials. While assessing credentials is a critical element to good immigration policy, it doesn't ensure that the individuals that settle in Ontario will have a job waiting for them when they arrive. This is the provincial

nominee program. We need to make sure that we're creating more opportunity for employers to create these types of positions and sponsorships. We need to tailor our immigration policy to our province's labour needs. I talked a little bit about the fact that when it comes to our health care system, there are many places where we can make improvements and eliminate some of the red tape that exists so that we're filling in some of those positions that need to be addressed.

I go back to my first comments, Madam Speaker, in the closing minutes that I have here. I look forward to continuing this debate at a future date. The province needs to get its act together. Don Drummond, in his report that he put out a couple of years ago that has been largely ignored by the government, despite paying a significant amount of money and building up the Drummond report: 60% of it, they'll say, has been implemented. They'll say that 60% of it has actually been implemented. Don Drummond will actually say that you needed to implement 100% of this. If you didn't like something that was in the Drummond report, you were going to have to replace what you don't like with something that's going to end up finding the same efficiencies in savings, but the government hasn't done that. As a matter of fact, when it came to the big recommendations in the Drummond report—those were going to be some hard decisions, and they didn't want to make those decisions.

What I find most interesting is that the Drummond report had great fanfare. It was like an Ontario budget. There was all of this hype, and the government spent a significant amount of money in making sure that this was a comprehensive report. It was a very comprehensive report on how we can get our province back to a balanced budget. There were a couple of items that were chosen but there were a lot that weren't, and they certainly haven't been replaced by new ideas on how we can get to balance. There has been no mention at all on getting us back to balance. It's almost laughable when the finance minister stands up and says that we're headed for a balanced budget in 2017-18, but there's absolutely no plan on how we're going to get there; just blank spaces in the budget columns.

We've done our part, as the official opposition, to put a plan on the table. The government has ignored our recommendations. The government has ignored many of the recommendations from its own report from Don Drummond.

Until we actually get our province back to balance, until we actually start to reduce the size of our multi-billion-dollar deficit, we're not going to become a location that's a desirable one for newcomers to Ontario, because, as I say, they are doing their homework. They're looking at jurisdictions that they can move to where they can get a job and raise a family with some predictability. I talk about families, but you talk about business owners, investors, job creators, and they're looking at the financial situation here in Ontario and they are not choosing Ontario, for a lot of reasons that I have mentioned over the last 45 minutes or so.

We've got to get these fundamentals right in Ontario. We've cleared the decks to allow the government to bring in a jobs plan. I look forward to seeing what their budget includes in the coming weeks, but from what we've been hearing and the legislation that we're debating, aside from this piece of legislation—much of the legislation that we're debating in the Legislature is going to make it more expensive to live in Ontario. It's going to make Ontario less attractive for investors.

Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba—you know, we talk about the numbers and the fact that we've seen the number of new Canadians doubling and tripling in some of these other western jurisdictions in particular. There's a reason for that. They are jurisdictions that have their financial act together. They have low deficits or no deficits and are possibly in surplus. They have low unemployment or no unemployment. They have many, many opportunities. Right now, we're living in a province where the government thinks that everything is just fine, and anybody looking at the provinces from outside can clearly see that we have a crisis here in Ontario financially. We're looking down the barrel of further tax increases under the current government. We need to bring in a new government with a new plan for Ontario to make it a desirable location for businesses, with an economic climate where they know that they can grow and expand and create jobs.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We are nearly at 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR THORNHILL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Thornhill.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): A certificate of the by-election is addressed to Mrs. Deborah Deller, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

"Dear Mrs. Deller:

"A writ of election dated the 15th day of January, 2014, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Anna Di Ruscio, returning officer for the electoral district of Thornhill, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Thornhill in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Peter Shurman, who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Thornhill, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Thornhill on the 13th day of February, 2014, Gila Martow has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 21st day of February, 2014, which is now lodged of record in my office."

Signed:

"Greg Essensa

"Chief Electoral Officer

"Toronto, February 24, 2014."

Ms. Martow was escorted into the House by Mr. Hudak and Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Gila Martow, member-elect for the electoral district of Thornhill, who has taken the oath, signed the roll and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the honourable member take her seat.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm proud to welcome to Queen's Park this morning the mayor of Brooke-Alvinston, Don McGugan; his wife, Anne; councillors Frank Nemcek, Jim Hayter and Wayne Deans; and Jack MacDonald. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome Mr. Graham Murray to question period this morning, joining us in the west members' gallery. Mr. Murray certainly is no stranger to the Legislature, having published his newsletter, *Inside Queen's Park*, for 27 years. I hope all members will join the Public Affairs Association of Canada this evening in room 230, where they will be honouring Graham for his years of service.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Ms. Shipra Mendiratta, mother of page Meera Chopra, and her grandparents Ram and Daya Mendiratta to the House today. They are visiting from Richmond Hill and we welcome them to the House.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to welcome three of my constituents from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Exsex, who are here as part of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. They are Brady Elliott, Gary Segeren and Samantha Stevens. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, good morning. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the family of page Aqil Syed—mother, Aniza Baksh; father, Syed Mahboob; and grandfather Mashur Syed—from the great riding of Pickering-Scarborough East to the Ontario Legislature to watch page Aqil as page captain today. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I've got a few constituents here today for the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. I've got constituents Jeremy Giret and Rod Crinklaw.

In the stands here today is Bayham councillor Tom Southwick. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my distinct pleasure to introduce Kate Barrie Hyatt, who's part of the class 15, Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, as well as I believe one of the leaders herself, Marlene Werry, a well-respected agricultural leader in Durham region.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to welcome, in the west members' gallery the mayor of Bracebridge, Mr. Graydon Smith, and deputy mayor of Bracebridge, Mr. Rick Maloney, who are down here for the ROMA-OGRA conference. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to welcome a very hard-working member of my constituency office staff in Thunder Bay—Superior North. Welcome, Stephen Margarit.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to introduce some great eastern Ontarians who are taking over Toronto today. From the township of Champlain in the Glengarry-Prescott-Russell area: Paul Emile Duval—why don't you give everybody a wave, Paul Emile? We've got Troy Carkner, Jacques Lacelle, James McMahon and, of course, my two favourites, Helen and Ray MacLeod.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We have here today, from class 15, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, Marvin Talsma, visiting Queen's Park from London, Ontario. Welcome, Marvin.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Joe Daunt, Troy Hamilton, Sara Little, Linda Slits, Peter Stolk and Sarah Van Nes here with the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, all from Perth-Wellington.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to introduce, from the wonderful riding of Huron-Bruce, Jutta Spletstoesser, who also is participating in the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have some friends here too from the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program: CEO Rob Black, Barry Micallef of the University of Guelph and participant Carolyn Kozak. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's my pleasure to introduce, from the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, initiated by Earl Mighton many years ago, Ridha Chilmeran from my riding of Halton.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Anne Marie Gillis, a councillor from Sarnia, to the Legislature today. I hope you'll be sitting down here soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, we have the mayor of Brantford, Ontario—as Walter Gretzky calls it, the centre of the universe—Mayor Chris Friel.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a point of order regarding petition P173. First, I want to thank Molly Sorensen from my riding for bringing this to my attention. I tabled petition P173, Minimum Care Standards in Long-Term Care Homes, Speaker, on October 8, and I believe I was due an answer from the ministry in early December.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): After checking with the table—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. After checking with the table, it is indeed overdue. Minister, I want to remind you that you are required by standing order 39(i) to file a response within 24 sessional days. Your response is now overdue, and I would ask if you give the House some indication as to when that response would be forthcoming.

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will ensure it is done in very short order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate the point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I'm standing, I'll wait for the attention of the member from Durham, who wants to have a conversation while I'm standing. Thank you.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On February 19, the member from Timmins–James Bay raised a point of privilege relating to an unsuccessful attempt the day before by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, during introduction of bills, to receive unanimous consent to have his just-introduced Bill 156 immediately called for second and third reading.

The member from Timmins–James Bay noted that an open letter was later issued by the member for Prince Edward–Hastings that asserted it was a member, or members, of the New Democratic caucus who said “no” to the request for unanimous consent.

The member from Timmins–James Bay took particular offence to this because he asserted his caucus was, in fact, in favour of the request for unanimous consent, and therefore no member of the NDP would have, or did, say “no.” For his part, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings said it was and remains his honest belief there were “noes” from the NDP caucus and that the opposite cannot be proven. This, of course, is exactly the point of the matter. I think this is sufficient to state the obvious, that being that on a request for unanimous consent no recording of the ayes or the nays is made and therefore no record exists of which member or members might have declined their consent. The Speaker simply hears at least one “no” and the House moves on. It is, therefore, dangerous to make allegations about requests for unanimous consent, and even more so to attribute motive for the perceived refusal, since by their nature requests for unanimous consent are handled without debate and, therefore, without any opportunity for a member to state a position for or against.

It is important to note that requests for unanimous consent are required when a deviation from the standing orders is being sought. This is not a trivial thing, and it is perfectly within the right of any member to object, and no justification needs to be made for doing so. In the case of the request by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, his bill had just been introduced and no other

member of the assembly had even seen it yet. From my perspective, it seems a bit unfair to put other members in that position, and uncharitable to criticize when the House does not blindly agree. In saying this, I note that more and more we seem to be seeing requests for unanimous consent that in my opinion are frankly engineered to be declined so that some sort of political advantage can be taken by the so-called “aggrieved party” that did not get its way. I can't say that I approve of this when it occurs, but I also have to note that during my Speakership I have seen this tactic used by all parties of this House, and I am satisfied—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Indeed—in this House, and I am satisfied enough by the evidence before me that this is another one of those instances. Being the victim of an ill-advised but all-too-common political tactic does not rise to the abuse of parliamentary privilege.

I do not want to seem dismissive of the point raised by the member of Timmins–James Bay, however, and want to address the ruling from the Canadian House of Commons that the member for Timmins–James Bay pointed out. As that ruling makes clear, it could amount to a breach of privilege if anyone, including a member of this assembly, were to deliberately misrepresent parliamentary proceedings, whatever the motivation for doing so, or its result. In this case, there are no actual recorded votes involved since, as I pointed out, none are recorded on requests for unanimous consent. The members from Timmins–James Bay and Prince Edward–Hastings are left having a dispute that the Speaker cannot resolve. I therefore cannot find that a *prima facie* case has been made out.

It is now time for—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like to thank you for your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Acknowledged.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Premier, this morning, I addressed the ROMA–Good Roads conference and I talked about our plan to create a million jobs in our province over the next eight years.

While we were presenting our plan for good jobs in our province and better take-home pay, the Liberal government was more concerned about restaurant menus. While we're counting on creating more jobs, your focus is on counting calories.

Let me ask you a very direct question, Premier. How many additional jobs will your restaurant menu legislation create in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, you know, the role of government is to do many things at the same time, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I notice the grade 5 students from Blessed John XXIII who have joined us this morning, and the menu labelling initiative that we brought forward is at least in part to make sure that those young people, who happen to come from the riding of Don Valley West, have all of the supports that they need to make sure they grow up healthy.

We're going to continue to bring forward education initiatives, we're going to continue to bring forward health initiatives, and we're going to continue to bring forward initiatives that will invest in businesses, support businesses to create jobs—all of those things at the same time, Mr. Speaker. That's what government has to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, respectfully, Premier, I want to see, when students grow up and graduate, that they've got a good job in the province of Ontario. Really, shouldn't that be our number one priority? I was certainly edified by your health minister's debate about what has more calories, a cheeseburger or a raisin muffin, but respectfully, I think the bigger debate is, how are we going to get people back to work in the province of Ontario? How are we going to get our energy costs under control? How will we get taxes down so all businesses can succeed in our province?

And I know you can do this, because time and time again the New Democratic Party props you up, no matter what you do. You've been given a licence to bring forward secondary bills instead of dealing with the true issues around jobs and the economy. So if they're going to prop you up again two times today, let me at least ask you this: Will you set aside your restaurant menu legislation and clear the way for my million jobs plan for people to go back to work in our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the Leader of the Opposition can minimize health initiatives, Mr. Speaker. He can minimize clean air initiatives like green energy. He can undermine and try to minimize education initiatives. But from my perspective, the economy is all of those things. Having healthy people, having an educated workforce, having businesses that are supported, having infrastructure that's in place: All of that is part of a healthy economy. So he can compartmentalize and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. The member from Northumberland will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He can compartmentalize, Mr. Speaker, and pretend that the health and well-being of our students is not part of a strong economy, but that is just not the case. I want to make sure that as the jobs that we are creating—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex will come to order. The mem-

ber from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—for example, at Conestoga Meat Packers in Breslau, 425 existing jobs and 100 new jobs because of investment; at CentreLine in Windsor, 31 new jobs and retaining 482 existing positions—I hope he would support those, even in his compartmentalized view of the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the Premier wants to hold everyone's hand 24 hours a day. I want to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—give people jobs in our province. I want to see business succeed again. While the Liberal Party seems lost in a maze of secondary legislation, we have a very clear-eyed vision to get Ontario back on track with more jobs and less debt.

I want to say, Speaker, I'm proud to introduce today the new member for Thornhill, Gila Martow. She is going to be a tremendous asset here in this Legislature. But I'll tell you this, Premier: When Gila Martow and I were knocking on doors in Thornhill, I didn't hear people, moms and dads, saying, "We want you to focus on counting calories." They wanted us to focus on counting that their kids would have a job when they graduate from school.

So put that aside. Pass our bill. Let's put people back to work in the province of Ontario.

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome—I should have done it off the top—the new member for Thornhill to the House. Welcome. It's great to have you here.

This sounds like flip political rhetoric that's coming from the Leader of the Opposition, but it's actually much more serious than that, because what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that an economic plan and a jobs growth plan have nothing to do with the health and education of the people of this province. That is just not the case.

When Cisco Systems Canada came to Ontario and added 1,700 high-tech jobs, with the potential of 5,000 jobs by 2024, we supported that. We're working with Cisco. We've created those jobs in partnership with Cisco. The Leader of the Opposition suggests that that's not related to education. We know the prime reason that Cisco came here is because of our educated workforce. They are connected. You cannot slash those services and have a strong economy.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health.

Minister, community care access centre executive salaries have skyrocketed over the last few years. In 2012, the average salary of the chief executive officers at the 14 CCACs in Ontario was \$234,000. In one case, the salary jumped by over 50% in three years. Compare this to the average personal support worker who makes an average of about \$20,000 a year, who hasn't seen any pay increase over the last three years.

Your government is now spending over \$30 million on executive salaries alone at the 14 CCACs and the Ontario association of CCACs, yet I consistently hear from seniors and families of individuals with developmental disabilities and other disabilities across the province that they are unable to access needed care.

Minister, can you tell us why you have allowed executive salaries to skyrocket over the last few years?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are concerned about executive compensation, not just in the health care sector but in the broader public sector. I will ask the Minister of Government Services to respond in the supplementary.

I want to underline, Speaker, that our commitment to health care transformation is built on home care. We are investing more in home care so more people can get the care they need at home, so they don't have to stay in hospital and they don't have to go into long-term care before they really need that kind of intensive care.

Two hundred thousand more Ontarians are getting home care now—200,000 more now than in 2003, when your party was in charge. We are getting people home from hospital more quickly. We are providing better care.

I will stand with those front-line providers. I will stand with home care, Speaker, because that's the investment we need to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Whatever investment the minister says has been made is clearly not being made in front-line services. I hear from people across the province who are desperately trying to access services through their CCAC. Your ministry has cut physiotherapy services that help seniors. You've reduced the number of diabetes test strips that are available to help people manage their own care.

As one nursing care provider stated to me, "The CCACs are great at spending dollars to save nickels." Yet the bigger issue of why up to 40% of the funds allocated to CCACs never make it to front-line care has been something you've consistently ignored.

Minister, why have you failed to ensure that the health care needs of vulnerable Ontarians are being met?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I've had to make some pretty tough decisions as Minister of Health, and that party opposite has not stood with me as I have made tough decisions. Every decision I have made is about providing more care to people in their own homes.

Our community care sector is growing. It is providing higher-quality care to hundreds of thousands of more people. We do not have it perfect. It's a whole lot better than it was, and it is getting better.

I remain open to ideas on how to get better value and serve more people. That is what I live for.

Are there better ways? I'm sure there are; we're listening. But I will not take lessons from the party that did not provide the home care that was necessary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is that thousands of Ontarians are not able to access home care. Executive salaries are skyrocketing. Front-line service providers are not being paid the rates that they should be paid for personal support workers. Up to 40% is spent on administration. There's a conflict of interest, with CCACs directly hiring people. In fact, this is a mess, and the minister has stood by and let this happen.

It's clear that we need urgent action to address the issue of the CCACs. That is why, in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts tomorrow, I will be asking for an Auditor General's review of the operations at the CCACs. Minister, will you stand and support this request?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course I'll support the Auditor General looking at home care, which the Auditor General did in 2010 and did a report again, back in 2012, and reported that patients were, by and large, satisfied with the services. The Auditor General also noted significant expansion in home care.

The member opposite makes the case that more people need more home care. I could not agree more, and that's why the last budget increased home care and community care by 6%, and we continue to keep expanding home care. The member opposite talked about physiotherapy. More people are getting faster access to physiotherapy now than they were under the old model.

We are transforming health care. Home care is at the foundation of that. When I see people who are able to live at home because of the services provided by home care, I know we are on the right track.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to begin by taking the opportunity, on behalf of New Democrats, to welcome the new member for Thornhill to the Legislature.

My question is for the Premier. The Premier may recall that in 2011, her government promised to reduce small business taxes from 4.5% to 4%. It was on page 13

of the Liberal fiscal framework. Can the Premier tell us what progress she has made thus far?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, we recently, as a result of the last budget, gave small businesses a break on the employee health tax. We are very, very aware of the needs of small businesses, and we support them. That break on their payroll was designed precisely to support them and to make sure that they have the capacity to expand and to hire more people. That's why we made that change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If we're going to grow and thrive, we need small businesses growing, creating jobs, innovating and building our economy. Is the Premier going to keep her promise to cut small business taxes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, we cut small business taxes from 5.5% to 4.5%. We have reduced. We extended the capital cost allowance to 2015. We reduced the employee health tax on 60,000 businesses, I think it is. So we have taken significant moves to support small business.

But the leader of the third party needs to know that revenue is extremely important in terms of delivering services, and cutting taxes across the board is not what we are going to do. That may be what the Leader of the Opposition believes is important. That's not what we're going to do. I'm surprised if that's where the leader of the third party wants to go.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to remind the Attorney General, the Minister of Rural Affairs and the Minister of Immigration that your Premier is answering a question while you're heckling.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need any others.

Final supplementary.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier this morning I laid out a plan, not just to increase the minimum wage but also to help small business. New Democrats are calling for a \$12 minimum wage by 2016, and we're calling for a cut to small business taxes. It's a responsible, affordable plan that will lift families out of poverty and ensure that small businesses can grow and create new jobs.

Is the Premier open to a fair and balanced approach?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, we're actually taking a fair and balanced approach, and it would have been fantastic if the leader of the third party had fed into that consultation, had been part of the discussion, before we brought our plan forward. This is an after-the-fact reaction. Welcome to the discussion. It's great that she has brought a position forward, Mr. Speaker.

We brought together business leaders, we brought together workers, and we brought together academics. We brought together a table of people, and they found unanimity for a predictable process going forward to index the minimum wage to inflation. We're going to be

introducing legislation to do that. I hope that the leader of the third party would support us.

As I say, we had extensive consultation. It would have been fantastic if she had taken part in that.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Statistics Canada recently released a report on the squeeze facing middle-class families, and it's not good news. It says the "middle class isn't growing," and "the middle class is no springboard to higher incomes." Does the Premier agree that the middle class is more squeezed than ever?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about this. Absolutely, we understand that people are struggling and that it is important that they have the support of their government to make sure that they have capacity to provide the opportunities that they need for their young people, for their parents.

The discussion that the Minister of Health was just having about home care is about providing opportunities for people to have supports at home and for their children and their grandchildren to get the supports that they need. So yes, we are very aware that people in the middle class need support in terms of helping their young people go to post-secondary, Mr. Speaker. That's what our 30%-off tuition grant is about.

We have put those supports in place. We will continue to do that work, and we look forward to working with whoever in this House is willing to work with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This weekend, one politician in Montreal expressed his concern. He said: "We need to ensure that governments keep costs as low as possible, especially for middle-class households. The middle class is already having a hard time making ends meet and struggling with debt. Tax increases for them are not in the cards and not on the table."

Justin Trudeau said that on Saturday, Speaker. Does the Premier agree with her federal leader?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: But, of course, if Justin Trudeau were the Prime Minister, we might have a partner in investing in transit. We might have a partner in affordable housing. We might have a partner in child care. We might have a partner that wouldn't cut our transfer payments and would stand up for Ontario. So I look forward to working with Justin Trudeau as the Prime Minister of this country. We will have a partnership that does not exist today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just want to remind the members that, as you do your interjections, I'm taking a mental note of who you are while you're speaking right over top of my discussion.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Premier, just read his lips that they shouldn't be putting any new taxes on the middle class. We should be focusing on making it easier for people to get into the middle class, not squeezing them out with new unfair taxes. We should be focused on making life more fair.

Families get that, New Democrats get that, and apparently even Justin Trudeau gets that. But this Premier doesn't seem to get it. She wants new taxes on families, and she's getting ready to cut taxes for people who are making over \$1 million a year, and she's creating new tax loopholes and giveaways for corporations. Does the Premier really think that's fair?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just be clear, once again, that what we believe is important is that people in this province have the infrastructure, and that means roads and bridges. Many of the members in the House have been to the Good Roads and the ROMA meeting in the last couple of days, and they know that every municipal leader there is concerned about investments in infrastructure. They know that those municipalities need to have the support, not just of the provincial government but of the federal government, to make sure that they have the investments necessary. So what I believe is that we have to make sure that that infrastructure is in place.

In my response to the first question, the point I was making is that if there were a federal partner who believed that investing in transit and roads and bridges in a systematic way across this province, that that was a priority, then we would be in a very different position.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I have to hand it to you. It's not easy getting 324 municipalities to agree, but you've done it at this year's ROMA-OGRA conference. All 324 of Ontario's OPP-policed municipalities agree that you failed to deliver on the biggest challenge they faced: policing costs. You're a year into the OPP billing review process and no closer to a fix. In fact, you've gone back to the drawing board because your first plan went down in flames. Now you're even farther away from the answer. How's that for leadership?

Forget the solution for a minute and answer this for everybody at ROMA-OGRA: After your performance, why should municipalities have any confidence that you'll even get the job done?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I also want to remind a couple of members on this side that when your own member is asking the question, it's kind of nice to allow them to put the question without heckling.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, I'm still trying to acknowledge you; I know you're excited.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm so excited about answering this question.

I hope the member on the other side would have been with me when I met with the 50 or more municipalities yesterday—

Interjection: Fifty or more meeting.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes—36 delegations to talk about OPP costs. I know that he was there this morning also to listen to the commissioner of the OPP, Chris Lewis, who explained that the system that we have in place is not fair and is not transparent—a system that was put in, I have to repeat, by your party, sir.

Even the Auditor General and the municipalities were complaining. The OPP knows that it's not a good system in place, and the Auditor General also told us, so that's what we are transforming. I've listened to the concerns of the community. We have consulted with all the community—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, Minister, let me tell you something. You're going to get no thank-you cards from municipalities for what you've done to the OPP billing costs. You've let those municipalities down because you don't understand what's wrong.

This isn't about tinkering with a costing formula to hurt some municipalities a little less than others. It isn't about the service, because we all know and we all respect the OPP officers and the difficult job that they do. You need to solve the underlying problem: Policing costs are spiralling out of control.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, come to order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Our leader, Tim Hudak, reaffirmed today his commitment to an Ontario PC government that will reintroduce the capacity to pay act and take the blank cheque away from arbitrators. That's a real plan to control costs for the long term, and you didn't need a fancy panel to tell you how to do it.

Why don't you finally admit that you don't have a plan, and use ours?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

In case the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation didn't hear me because he was talking while I was trying to tell him to stop—stop.

Minister.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm going to say to the member from Leeds-Grenville that what's wrong is that there are 325 municipalities receiving OPP services. Some are paying zero and some are paying \$1,000. That's what is wrong—

Interjection: Per household.

1110

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Per household. So that's what we're trying to fix. We have a model that is in con-

sultation as we speak, and this model will be transparent and fair to every municipality and every taxpayer in these municipalities.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Leeds–Grenville: Stop.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: One thing that occurred is that they are all very, very pleased with the service that the OPP is offering. I got it from every municipality. We're going to work with them. For those municipalities that will go from zero to another cost, and those that are paying \$1,000, to the real cost they should pay, we will try to help them—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Whether it's families that rely on paycheques from Vertis, DMI Industries or Jarvis Street Pharma, we see those paycheques gone, and people in Niagara see that the Liberal status quo isn't working for families.

An increase to the minimum wage to \$12 will ensure that families get a raise. Small business tax relief will ensure that small business—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock. Start the clock.

Finish your question, please.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Small business tax relief will ensure that small businesses that are the backbone of the economies like Niagara can grow and create jobs.

Does the Premier agree that families need an increase to the minimum wage to \$12 by 2016, and that small businesses deserve a break?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, I want to welcome the member to this House. I'm pleased to have a question from him.

Just a reminder to the member that we established an advisory panel that was made up of labour, business, anti-poverty and youth groups last June, in 2013. They consulted Ontarians across this wide province. They had about 400 submissions.

How many submissions did the NDP make to that panel? Zero. How many questions have the NDP asked on the issue of minimum wage in this House? Zero. How many times did this member or his leader speak in the by-election about minimum wage? Zero.

Speaker, their position is too little, too late. We're not interested in playing *The Price Is Right* in this House.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. Now that we've asked the question, maybe you can answer it.

Mr. Speaker, small business is the backbone of our economy and they're the backbone of Niagara. Small businesses' paycheques pay the bills for thousands of families. We need a balanced approach where families get a raise and we ensure that we create more jobs by letting small businesses grow and thrive.

Will the Premier agree to lower small business taxes to offset a meaningful increase to the minimum wage?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member again for an important question. Part of the process that we engaged in was to ensure that we have thorough understanding and consultation with businesses, especially our small businesses, across the province. That's why we made sure that the panel consisted of representatives from both the retail sector and from the tourism sector, along with labour, along with anti-poverty groups and youth groups.

Speaker, one of the things that we heard again and again and that was reported by the panel is that businesses want predictability. They do not want an ad hoc process where numbers are pulled out of hats, like the NDP is suggesting now, which is too little, too late. What they want is a predictable system by which they can do business planning and they know exactly what the minimum wage is. That's why we're going to be tabling a bill indexing the minimum wage to the cost of living. I hope the NDP supports that bill.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, no parent wants their son or daughter to suffer an acquired brain injury, but when tragedy strikes, they need to know care will be there for them.

Families in Oakville, Burlington and Hamilton have been concerned recently about reports of changes in brain injury care at McMaster Children's Hospital. Recently, the member for Hamilton Mountain asked why these brain injuries are no longer being treated at that hospital. I'd like to assure my constituents that the services are indeed still there and they're available when they need them.

Would the minister tell this House what these changes mean for kids and their families in the Hamilton, Oakville and Burlington area?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member from Oakville for giving me a chance to clear the air around these changes. I want to be absolutely clear: McMaster Children's Hospital is still treating children with acquired brain injuries, contrary to the assertions made by the member from Hamilton Mountain.

In fact, the recent changes will allow patients to receive more timely care. Previously, the ABI, acquired brain injury, clinic ran twice a month. That sometimes caused a delay for patients from the time they received the injury—perhaps a concussion, perhaps another brain injury—to the time when they were seen in the clinic.

Now patients with brain injuries, with head injuries, are seen within days in the pediatric neurosurgery clinic, where they're provided with a prompt assessment and referred to the appropriate type of care. That care might be in the community, Speaker, or it might be more specialized care through the Hamilton Health Sciences Chedoke site.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm sure that all families in all of those communities I mentioned will be relieved to know this vital service is still provided by McMaster Children's Hospital. Kids with head injuries will now be cared for more effectively and efficiently.

Speaker, the minister also mentioned the growing access to community care in her response. It's well known by all of us in this House that receiving the right care, at the right time, in the right place, is a key commitment of the action plan for health care.

Would the minister share with this House how increased investments in community care can benefit patients with acquired brain injuries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm very happy to have this question.

Living with an acquired brain injury can be very difficult for the individual and also for their families, so they need supports in their day-to-day lives.

I'm very proud to say that we have nearly doubled funding for acquired brain injuries since 2003. We've also increased our investments in assisted living by 124%—well more than doubled—since 2003. We're also helping in an increased way with services like Meals on Wheels, transportation services, home maintenance and repair.

Speaker, these investments are helping dedicated workers and volunteers take care of Ontarians outside of hospitals, in their communities and in their homes. We will continue to work with people with acquired brain injuries and their advocates to continue this work.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier, and it's on the Far North Act.

Premier, part of the problem with the Far North Act, which your government passed in 2010, is that it puts half of the Far North off limits for any development that might benefit the people who live and work in the north.

There's supposed to be land use planning done so there are clear boundaries for the 225,000 square kilometres that can't be used to the benefit of northerners. This uncertainty has been a particular challenge to those seeking to explore and develop the Far North. It's sending the wrong message: that the north is closed for business. So my question to you is this: Have you figured out exactly what quarter-million square kilometres of northern Ontario are off limits for northerners?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Natural Resources.

1120

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to take the question from the member opposite. I think the member opposite knows full well that the Far North planning act is designed to create exactly what he's talking about—certainty—because, left to their government, there was considerable uncertainty. We had situations in the past where we had mining activities where we've had protests and blockades. We had the KI/Platinex issue. Those are the kinds of circumstances we don't want evolving in northern Ontario.

The member knows that the Far North Act is designed to create the certainty that both First Nations want and business wants. In fact, we've got five First Nations communities in northern Ontario that have actually created land use planning that helped to create certainty in their communities.

Speaker, what I would say to the member opposite with respect to this issue is that the Far North Act, although it may be, for political opportunism, used to be misrepresented by people in northern Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Hon. David Oraziotti: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): His time is up. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: There's no denying that the Far North Act has cost Ontario jobs. We've been forced to watch as overlapping claims and government-imposed exclusion zones have wreaked havoc for exciting new mining projects. And when you eventually get around to mapping the half of northern Ontario that is off limits, what happens when a new remote mine or the next Ring of Fire is discovered right in the middle of it? You are set to deny northerners the jobs and prosperity from future resource development when they are needed most.

Premier, what is your plan B when you get the mapping wrong?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Speaker, the effort that we are making to ensure that the Far North Act and that the land use planning that's undertaken in the region gets it right is the partnerships that we're building with First Nations and the communities in the Far North that want to see economic benefits, that want to see land development, but they also want the certainty of land use planning. First Nation communities have indicated their support, and Julie Denomme, the vice-chair of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, also said, "Overall, we agree with the act and we like it and we see there's value" in it.

So both sides—First Nations communities, people who represent business in the Far North and represent communities, agree that the Far North Act is something that is of value and creates certainty for businesses, and they support it, Speaker. That's why we move forward with the legislation.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. For years, New Democrats have urged this government to focus on delivering front-line care to patients instead of lining the pockets of health care executives. In December, we finally heard a promise from this government, but no action followed.

This month, the exorbitant salaries and pay increases to CCAC CEOs, like London CEO Sandra Coleman's increase of 144%, made the front page news. Once again, Speaker, the minister made a promise to do something, but again no action has been taken.

Can the minister explain why even outrageous salary increases like Ms. Coleman's do not inspire the minister to take action right now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Government Services.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: It's great to be popular, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to talk about our plans for executive compensation, but at the beginning I just want to reiterate what the Minister of Health said about the improvements within community care in this province over the past 11 years. I remember, quite frankly, it was one of the biggest issues in 2003: the cuts that had taken place under the previous government. When you compare and contrast what's happened, Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very proud of the story this government can tell.

In terms of executive compensation, as I indicated in this House before Christmas, we will be coming forward shortly with legislation which will empower the government to undertake the analysis and work that needs to be done to set forward frameworks, complete with a hard cap, to deal with executive compensation in the broader public service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I heard the House leader say that he is proud of the story that this government has told. It's a horror story, Speaker. So many of the people who deliver care continue to struggle to make ends meet, and they are the first ones to have their hours cut when this government is looking for cost savings in health care. Seniors who depend on a home care system keep telling us that they want improvements to the front-line care, but instead we keep seeing the money that should be invested in care going to well-paid executives, lining their pockets.

Why should Ontarians believe this minister and her latest promise to do something will result in action? Can we get a promise to see any kind of action any time soon?

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's time for a few facts, so let me share some facts with you. As the members opposite will know, we used to have 42 CCACs; we

now have 14. That has saved \$2 million in executive compensation. The total percentage of CCAC budgets spent on CEO salaries has been cut in half.

When it comes to getting better care for patients, CCACs have been leaders in transformation. Let me give you some examples: The Home First program, which supports people at home rather than waiting in a hospital for long-term care, has been an extraordinary success. Internationally, people are looking at this practice. In the South West LHIN alone, Home First has saved, in one year, \$10 million and provided a significantly higher quality of care.

There are many examples I would love to share with the House on home care improvement.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. I think that I can speak for everyone when I say that our seniors have contributed in a significant way to the success of this province, and I strongly believe that seniors continue to contribute to the prosperity and the foresight of our communities, our cities and our province throughout their life.

In my riding of York South-Weston, I often meet with many seniors' groups who remain active and involved within their community, such as the York West Active Living Centre, the St. Fidelis Golden Age Club, and club 600. Groups such as these are a great example for all of us.

With inspiring seniors such as these across our province, what role does our government play in encouraging and supporting active seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Let me welcome the members from Thornhill and Niagara Falls as well. Congratulations to them.

Let me say that the member from York South-Weston is a tireless worker on behalf of the people of her constituency. Her seniors are no different than seniors in my area, the ones in Hamilton or Kingston or Leamington. They all have the same aspirations. Speaker, you know and I know that growing old does not mean losing our place in society—

Interjection: Not at all.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Not at all—it does not mean that we can no longer contribute. To help do that, thanks to help from our Premier, from other members and from stakeholders, on Friday we announced the first seniors' grant program directly addressing seniors' issues. I have to say that organizations such as the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, and Bernard Jordaen—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for his commitment to the seniors of our province. Our government has been driving the implementation of programs for seniors that will help to promote volunteerism, expand education and learning, and assist Ontario seniors in overcoming issues such as social isolation. This grant

program will go a long way in helping many of our seniors' groups in my riding and beyond.

Can the minister provide us with additional details regarding this important initiative?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Indeed, this is the first program that directly addresses seniors in need. I'm delighted that the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat has been working very effectively in providing an application that is ready as of February 21. It's ready, it's very simple and it's accessible to all seniors' groups. It aims to support groups of seniors—non-profit, of course. That is, to engage them, to get them out of isolation, bring them into community groups and keep them active. That is the intent. These supports as well are on top of what we have already done through the Ontario seniors' action plan. This goes a long way in getting to our seniors throughout Ontario. The grants are between \$500 and \$10,000, and it's in support of providing more active activities and programs for our seniors.

1130

ARBITRATION

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a question for the Premier. Premier, municipal representatives from all over Ontario are gathered this week at the ROMA-Good Roads convention. I have met with over 20 delegations, and the most-expressed number one request was that interest arbitration must be reformed, and it must be reformed now.

Are you going to deliver on your promise to reform arbitration and save municipalities from bankruptcy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the member's question. I had the great honour to be at the ROMA-OGRA conference. In fact, I participated in the ministers' session as well, along with our Premier. Interestingly, not a single member of the municipalities asked me about interest arbitration, nor did anybody request it from a delegation.

But that doesn't mean that we're not working on this very important issue. As I have stated before in the House, and as the Premier stated, we are very much committed to developing a new interest arbitration system in our province which is fair and balanced. But we will not bring any kind of scheme—as has been suggested by the Leader of the Opposition—that may be unconstitutional or that is going to expose the municipalities to the kind of cost that they don't want and that they should not be incurring.

We are working on a model which is based on consensus, and I will provide you a little bit more detail as to that model in my supplementary.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Again to the Premier: Premier, municipalities and rural residents need action today. Your indecision over any issue that may upset your public-sector support base is causing misery.

We have a plan, and we brought it to this Legislature before. It is Bill 44, the capacity to pay act, which AMO

wanted to see examined in committee. You voted it down.

Premier, do the right thing: Deliver on your commitment to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and reform interest arbitration now. Or does it take an Ontario PC bill to get things going?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I mentioned, Speaker, we want to reform our interest arbitration system so it is fair and balanced, but we want to do it in a manner that is built on consensus.

That's why I'm very proud that we have a process in place right now that has brought in the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, our firefighter partners and our police associations, who are working together, building a model together that can actually work and help ensure that we have a fair and balanced system.

The kind of bill that they proposed, which this Legislature voted against, is not the way to go. It's unconstitutional, it's unilateral, and it's not going to give the kind of relief that municipalities want.

What's important to note is what our municipalities were talking about yesterday at ROMA-OGRA. They want to make sure that we continue to invest in our infrastructure. They want to make sure that there are good roads and bridges in our communities. That's the kind of partnership that we are continuing to build with our municipalities—along with ensuring that we continue with the \$2-billion upload of social assistance costs that our government committed to, and we will continue to do that.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Transportation: This winter, private snow-clearing contractors in the north were fined for failing to meet road-clearing standards, which confirmed what NDP MPPs have been saying for years: that the PC and Liberal privatization of road-clearing is failing northerners.

Just this month, the minister went on CBC Radio in Thunder Bay and said that the Liberal government would look at bringing some of these services back in-house. He also apologized to those in the northwest for our road conditions. When can northern Ontario expect to see this government follow through on its promise to reverse the privatization of winter road maintenance?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I met, at ROMA-Ontario Good Roads, with all of the municipalities affected, and we've worked out, I think, a plan and partnership to go forward, to do reform and to change the model. We're working with the Ontario road builders, and we're very excited about that.

But Mr. Speaker, the party opposite would take us back to \$3 billion in infrastructure spending. That would reduce household incomes by \$18,000 and business income by \$50,000. They're not talking about invest-

ments in public services. Both parties started this morning with a new tax cut. Do you know what? I have listened to municipalities from Cornwall to Kenora asking for better public services, better snow removal, better roads and bridges. We're now at 2% of GDP. Municipalities are at 1% and the federal government is missing in action. When are they going to start—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Minister, we're talking—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —the question. I don't need your interjections.

Supplementary.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. Maybe I should remind the minister that we're talking about winter highway maintenance.

This Liberal government keeps shifting blame. But the truth is that under this Liberal government, privatization of snow-clearing contracts has increased and MTO oversight has decreased.

In the northwest, we've never seen 14 transport pilots before. In response to my question on snow clearing in November, the minister stated, "I will come to your constituency. I will meet with the contractor with you and we'll make sure you get satisfaction." Since that time, I have contacted his office numerous times and received no response. Is the minister not responding because he's nervous about driving our roads? Or is he planning to wait until spring when the snow is gone before following through on his commitment to come and see the conditions first-hand?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we added 50 vehicles to northern roads this year, which was an unprecedented increase. I have met and talked with every mayor. We are maintaining standards and improving them.

We met with about 17 municipalities this morning, who have all said since those changes have been complete, the service in the north has been quite remarkable and good. Since the additional 16 vehicles were added, every single mayor said to me that they are pleased with the reforms in that, and we're not stopping there. We have agreed to a practice of reform for next year to make additional improvements. I'm still waiting for the third party to actually start addressing the issues raised at ROMA and Ontario Good Roads, which is: What is their position on infrastructure funding? Will they maintain \$15 billion, \$14 billion? What is their position on municipal funding? Do they have a position on anything that's important—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la ministre des Services aux consommateurs, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles.

Speaker, as you'll appreciate, purchasing a home—a place of one's very own—is part of the Canadian dream. Such purchases are usually the biggest transaction that people are likely to engage in during their entire lives. This is especially true in my own riding of Etobicoke North.

As stewards of this marketplace, the government of Ontario must help people feel protected, informed, knowledgeable and fully apprised of their options. This is not just a real estate transaction, but a visible and tangible correlate of people's hopes, dreams and aspirations. In Ontario, Speaker, quite reasonably, we're finding more and more people requesting a home inspection before finalizing the purchase agreement. But how can we ensure that those home inspection reports are valid, sound and up to standard?

I'd ask the minister to please inform this chamber: How can we work collectively to make sure that Ontarians are protected when making this important, life-changing purchase?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for this fabulous question. It's very timely. Speaker, the House may or may not know that more than 70% of resale homes being inspected in Ontario are taking those inspections, which is 140,000 homes next year. That's a lot of home inspections.

The member is correct in saying that a home inspection that's sound, conducted by someone who's trained and experienced and professional can provide that sense of assurance and confidence before people make a big purchase, often their biggest one, and sign on a dotted line. The member is also correct in saying that there is currently no minimum standard, no qualification standard whatsoever for home inspectors in this province. There are many good ones, but there are no standards.

That's why we established a panel of experts. The panel has met several times. A report has been submitted, and we are currently reviewing the report and looking forward to the next steps.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, for addressing this important file. I know that constituents in my own riding of Etobicoke North will benefit from this added scrutiny of the home inspection domain.

Speaker, as a government, of course, it's important for us to ensure that all Ontarians trust and have confidence in the goods and services they are buying. The larger the purchase, the more important it is that there's equity and transparency. As the qualifications and changes to the sector being considered will be of huge importance and will impact home-buying decisions across Ontario, can the minister please share with this House when we can expect these decisions to be made to benefit potential home buyers?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: After we received the report, it was posted on the Ontario government registry from mid-December to January 27, and the next step, of course, is to analyze both the panel's recommendations as well as the feedback we received from the public.

We have every intention of moving forward with this very, very soon, and when we do, Speaker, I certainly hope, I really hope, that we will have all-party support for this legislation. I am confident that our government is not alone in caring about the fate of home purchasers in Ontario.

I want to all the members who worked on the panel for getting us to this point, and I look forward to bringing something forward to the House very, very soon.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, you know that the agri-food industry not only provides significant economic output; they purchase the majority of our farmers' products. Four months ago, you told the agri-food industry to double their growth but did nothing to make that possible. Premier, these businesses want to grow. It's your government that's holding them back. We've heard from the food processors that their biggest challenge is the massive hydro increases. In fact, we've heard that many of them have told you the same thing. As Premier and Minister of Agriculture, have you done anything at all to deal with these hydro increases hitting these food processors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to speak generally to the energy sector in the supplementary, but what I want to say is that we are very aware that supporting the food processing industry right now is extremely important. The Minister of Children and Youth Services made an announcement on Friday with Thomas Canning, an investment that will help that organization to grow and to create 40 new full-time jobs.

We're very, very keen, Mr. Speaker, on supporting the agri-food sector. When I posed the challenge to the food processing and agri-food sector, I said that we were not expecting them to go it alone. We knew that they would need support and investment from government. We are right there with them. In fact, the food processors of Ontario have set out a plan. They know what their objectives are, and they know they have a partner in this government.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Premier, since you issued your challenge, Heinz and Kellogg's both announced closures. That's 1,260 jobs. Add the 40 jobs that you just talked about, and that's still a loss of 1,220 jobs.

Food manufacturers are facing challenges caused by your government. Research by the CFIB, Alliance of Ontario Food Processors and our caucus shows that. These businesses are struggling with red tape, trade barriers and high costs of operating in Ontario.

Two weeks ago, I wrote you and asked you to support the Million Jobs Act to reverse your government's policy that are forcing businesses out of Ontario. It would create jobs and help food processors meet your challenge. Premier, will you help these businesses to grow by supporting the Million Jobs Act introduced by our leader, Tim Hudak?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the great things about the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which has created and retained nearly 24,000 jobs together with the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, is that 95% of the investments go to manufacturing, and many of those are in food processing. I'm just going to name a few: Original Foods in Dunnville—I had the pleasure of being at the opening—150 new jobs; Armstrong Milling, 10 jobs in Hagersville; Conestoga Meat, 100 jobs in Breslau; Elmira Pet Products, 25 jobs in Elmira. The list goes on: Natra in London—I was there with the Minister of Health just a couple of weeks ago—56 jobs there as well; NutraBlend Foods in Brantford, 53 new jobs. That's in addition to the many hundreds of jobs that are retained. That's just in the last few months.

I'd be happy to continue the list—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Energy.

Under this government's watch, electricity prices have doubled in this province. While power gets sold across the border to New York state at a fraction of what Ontarians pay, the Welland Curling Club in my riding is in danger of closing because of sky-high hydro bills.

How does this government justify the doubling of hydro rates, the doubling of electricity prices and the pain that it's causing residents throughout the province, including my home riding of Welland?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we have made significant investments in the energy sector, in transmission and generation. That created price pressures. We created a number of price mitigation programs to assist companies, and one of those was the Industrial Electricity Incentive program. As of January 2013, industrial companies could be eligible for electricity rates among the lowest in North America if they started or expanded operations and created jobs through this program.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The member from Northumberland is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Under the IEI program, last month Detour Gold was one of the successful proponents in the first round, and it claims that the program will save them \$20 million in 2014.

This program uses surplus electricity, and we are providing it to companies in Ontario rather than exporting it to New York or anywhere else where they can use it against us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Community clubs like the Welland Curling Club are at the heart of social life in our

communities. If these clubs are being hurt because of skyrocketing electricity prices—it means that community arenas, community social clubs, community curling clubs are going to be affected. There are 60,000 curlers in this province, and there are 100 curling clubs at risk of closing because of these high rates.

How does this government justify doubling the electricity prices under its watch and the harm that it's bringing to our local communities? What is this government going to do to help the skaters, the hockey players and the curlers in this province, to make sure that these avenues that are available to them today are going to remain open this year and next year?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, that party has no position on energy whatsoever. I understand that they haven't said so, but they don't support new nuclear. They continually get up and oppose nuclear refurbishment. That represents 50% of the generation in the province of Ontario. Their plan on energy, their program, is a blank sheet. We don't know what they will do to mitigate rates.

When we released our long-term energy plan, both leaders were asked what they would do to reduce rates. The Leader of the Opposition was asked, "Can he reduce rates?" The answer was no on that. We asked the leader of the third party, "Would she be able to reduce rates?" The answer was no on that.

Mr. Speaker, we're working on reducing rates, and we'll have more to announce in the near future.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I appreciate this. I just want to introduce a good friend who has been a very strong adviser to me on small-town economic development and agribusiness issues. Albert Witteveen from class 15 of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program is in the gallery. I just wanted to welcome him to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I want to correct my record. I think I said that the OPP is policing 325 municipalities. It's 324.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It was a point of order—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I found that inappropriate.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford on a point of order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order, I'd like to introduce Myron Gerber, a member of class 15 of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, who is here with us today. I'd like to say welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome, from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Gabrielle Ferguson and Erin Wright, who are here from the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Northumberland—Quinte West?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to be noticed in the House.

I'd like to greet—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't worry. I do.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: —Lori Caughey from Northumberland—Quinte West. She's a member of the class of 15 in the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. I want to welcome her to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize Marlene Werry from the agricultural leadership group, as well as Kate Barrie Hyatt from the class of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to welcome the grade 9 class from my riding from Maplewood High School, and they're from the Kingston-Galloway area.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to welcome the rest of class of 15, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program: Sabrina Bladon, Claire Cowan, Donna Downey, Tom Farfaras, Heather Hargrave, Kate Hyatt, Henriët DeBruin, as well as Arlene Werner. They're all here to experience question period today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have one quick announcement, myself, before I move to where we are supposed to be. I do want to give you a gentle and subtle reminder that we have changed how we do introductions for the purpose so that we avoid what we just did. So please, even if they're not here, introduce them during the times of introductions, and I will give us as much leeway as we need. But if we keep doing this, well then we're just reinventing the same thing and adding more time to your valuable time during question period and debate. Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

INTERIM SUPPLY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We do have a deferred vote on the motion for interim supply, so we'll call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1156.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

On February 24, 2014, Mr. Milloy moved that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and the necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2014, and ending on September 30, 2014. Such payment shall be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2014-15 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hatfield, Percy	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadi, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Jeffrey, Linda	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Phil	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Ted	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Forster, Cindy	Milloy, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Holyday, Douglas C.	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have deferred votes on government orders 11 through to 21, inclusive. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1202.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hatfield, Percy	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadi, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Jeffrey, Linda	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Forster, Cindy	Milloy, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Holyday, Douglas C.	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. All those in favour, rise one at a time—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation. All those in favour, rise one at a time—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Infrastructure. All those in favour—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. All those in favour, please rise one at a time—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Milloy has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Consumer Services. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motions agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes.

The member from Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Earlier today, the member from Ajax-Pickering put on each member's desk an invitation to Durham Day on March 3. The point of order is that, really, the tradition here has been to respect all members representing the area that's being celebrated—on Monday, in this case. When I looked at the material, I was quite disappointed. It was organized by the member from Ajax-Pickering. The issue is, I called the regional chairman to see—because the member from Whitby-Oshawa and the member from Oshawa, as well as the member from Kawartha Lakes-Brock, were not featured as MPPs on the brochure. That was the first thing. Secondly, there were pictures of the two Liberal members on the material. The regional chairman had not seen the material or signed off.

This is an important event in Durham. All five members should be recognized. My point is this: Who paid for it? Who approved it? We were never consulted on this. That is shameful.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I really find it difficult to rule on something that the member continues to debate.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy is not being helpful.

That is not in particular a point of order here, except I will take the member's word about distributing materials in this House completely. Members have the right to distribute materials, but I caution, and I offer it as a serious caution, that it should not have any political overtones in it whatsoever. It is not permitted.

I would also recommend that, in this particular case, this is something that should be taken up with the group that is organizing this particular event to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

I want to offer that caution one more time: Nothing in this building is supposed to be political in nature, as distributed by anybody, including your staff. It should not be displayed in windows. It should not be put on the

tables here. We've dealt with this a couple of times and I'm using this as a reminder that it is not to be done.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Paul Miller: Today, it's my honour to welcome a good friend of mine, Graham Murray, the editor of Inside Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also the original chair of the Speaker's Book Award.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GRAHAM MURRAY

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, known for his intelligence and wit, which can often precede his presence, Graham Murray has worked in and around Queen's Park for over 40 years, first as a lobbyist, then as a political adviser and researcher for a political party and, most recently, as a consultant with his own firm.

As a consultant, Graham established the newsletter Inside Queen's Park, which became the must-read item to stay in the know around Queen's Park. But if asked, Graham will say he's most proud of his involvement with programs instrumental in forming the next generation of Ontario legislators: the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme, by which he was named an honorary intern in 2007; and the Speaker's Book Award, to which Speaker Levac appointed him founding chair.

When I first was elected, Graham Murray was very kind to me, taking me under his wing, even when he didn't have to. He's a gentleman, a straight shooter and, in the short time I've known him, I consider him both a mentor and friend.

Graham is currently pondering whether or not he is retired, but I think it's pretty doubtful. I know he'll always have an opinion to share with us.

This evening, there's a reception here at Queen's Park. The Public Affairs Association of Canada will recognize Graham's many achievements, including as president of PAAC, and give thanks to this long-time practitioner of public affairs in this province. I encourage you all to attend and honour a great guy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Speaker's prerogative would be to offer my congratulations as well and to thank Graham for all his many years of work in the public domain. Thank you.

FAMILY DAY WALKATHON

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, four years ago, the Mississauga Muslim Community set themselves a goal, a goal to organize a Family Day Walkathon every year and

raise a quarter of a million dollars over five years. The money was for the Trillium Health Partners Credit Valley ER expansion.

This last Sunday, under the leadership of AbdulQayyum Mufti, the Mississauga Muslim Community accomplished this goal one year ahead of schedule and have now raised \$250,000 in just four years.

Speaker, it is indeed an inspiring story, but what is even more inspiring is the leadership that Mississauga's Muslim community has shown. With this annual walkathon and the funds they have raised, the community is saying, "We are taking responsibility for the larger Mississauga community. We are willing to do the heavy lifting required to ensure that we have a healthy and vibrant Mississauga."

What they are showing us is what it means to be a fully paid-up citizen. For that, we are inspired, and we thank them so very much. I wish them well, and I look forward to being part of their walkathon next year and look forward to them raising more money.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to speak to a very important issue that has affected a number of communities in my riding as well as across rural Ontario. During the recent ROMA-OGRA conference, I had the opportunity to meet with delegations from across Parry Sound-Muskoka, who expressed a deep concern with increasing policing costs and the proposed new OPP billing model. Under the new model, small, rural townships are being asked to pay yet again, this time with staggering increases in the cost of policing.

Take, for instance, the municipalities of west Parry Sound, who will see their costs rise from \$3.4 million to over \$6.5 million. The cost of policing for the township of Archipelago is set to increase a startling 1,000%. The district of Muskoka would see a 72%, or \$7.5-million, increase. This alarming theme is playing out across rural Ontario. Municipalities with already constrained budgets are faced with yet another unexpected cost from the provincial government.

Responsible, budget-minded municipalities in my riding are trying to move forward on projects, including local public transportation projects and much-needed infrastructure improvements. These increased costs have blindsided many, and threaten to put these planned projects on hold indefinitely.

Mr. Speaker, PC Leader Tim Hudak spoke today at the ROMA-OGRA conference and pledged to bring in the capacity to pay act, if our party becomes the government, as part of the solution to address ever-increasing policing costs.

RARE DISEASE DAY

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to recognize Rare Disease Day, which is fast approaching on Friday, February 28. Rare Disease Day is an internationally recognized

day to raise awareness for the many people across the globe who suffer from a rare disease. This year's theme is "Care," and the focus is on providing better care for those who are suffering. Patient organizations in Canada have been involved in Rare Disease Day since 2008 and serve as the voice for the one in 12 Canadians who are affected by a rare disease.

One of these Canadians lives in my riding. He sent me a message earlier this month to tell me his story. Henk van der Wilt suffers from cavernous angioma and for the past 3.5 years has suffered from severe, painful headaches and fatigue. Cavernous angioma is clusters of abnormally dilated blood vessels that can be found in the brain and spinal cord and, more rarely, in the skin and retinas. Only 0.2% of Canadians suffer from this disease, and often show symptoms beginning in their 20s and 30s. It can include seizures, stroke symptoms, hemorrhages and headaches. Mr. van der Wilt asked me to bring awareness not only to his disease but to make the Ontario Legislature aware of Rare Disease Day and the many Canadians who are affected.

I would like to thank Mr. van der Wilt for reaching out to me and for sharing his story with the Legislature.

ALEX PIETRANGELO

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is my pleasure to stand in the House after an Olympic Games for the second time to acknowledge a gold medalist from King township in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. Alex Pietrangelo, who plays in the NHL for the St. Louis Blues, won a gold medal on Sunday as a member of the Canadian men's hockey team, and joins King township resident Rosie MacLennan, who was the only Canadian to win gold at the 2012 summer games.

Alex had a stellar performance at the Olympics. He formed part of the defensive core of Canada's men's hockey team, which allowed only three goals in six games during the entire Olympic tournament. In fact, Alex and his defence partner, Jay Bouwmeester, were on the ice for only one goal against during the entire tournament, and shut down some of the best players in the world time after time.

Alex's Olympic gold medal is part of a long list of accomplishments that include a gold medal at the 2009 World Junior Hockey Championship, and best defenceman at both the 2010 World Junior Hockey Championship and the 2011 World Men's Ice Hockey Championship.

I am excited that King township Mayor Steve Pellegrini has said that a township presentation will be made to Alex, much like there was this past summer to current Stanley Cup champion Danny Carillo, another well-decorated NHL player from King township.

Congratulations, Alex and Team Canada: a job well done.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. Victor Fedeli: There is widespread opposition to the recommendation of the Premier's transit panel to

implement a 10-cent-a-litre gas hike. It was a common theme at the pre-budget hearings conducted by the finance committee in January, and a common theme at OGRA-ROMA today.

The mayor of the municipality of East Ferris wrote the Premier recently to express his dismay. He noted that rural Ontarians already pay 14.5 cents a litre to subsidize the government coffers, "without much return." He further stated, "I am not willing to have my residents charged an additional tax in order to subsidize metro Toronto transit and I am certain that I would receive unanimous support on this stand." He concluded his letter to the Premier by saying it "seems to me to be another assault on our rural municipalities."

1510

The council of Papineau-Cameron, also in my riding, and the towns of Chappleau and Laurentian Hills have written me with concerns and have passed council resolutions endorsing the letter from Mayor Vrebosch.

Speaker, this is nothing more than a cash grab and a shell game to allow the government to appear to be reducing the deficit faster. Rural and northern Ontarians see right through this, and we won't stand for it. I urge this House to support my opposition day motion tomorrow not to increase taxes.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased today to rise and add my voice to the chorus of support and appreciation and thanks for all of Canada's winter Olympians who have returned from Sochi, Russia.

As all of us in the House know, Canada this year won gold in men's and women's hockey, and as most of us know, Canada won gold in 2010 in Vancouver in both men's and women's hockey as well.

Now, Speaker, there is a common denominator with those four gold medals, and that is that each of those four teams, in 2010 and 2014, had Thunder Bay athletes on those teams. The 2010 women's team had Haley Irwin on it. The 2010 men's team had Eric Staal on it. We in Thunder Bay are still trying to figure out how Staal was not on the 2014 team. The 2014 team once again had Haley Irwin on it, a two-time gold medal winner, and the 2014 men's team, of course, had Patrick Sharp, a two-time Stanley Cup winner from the Chicago Blackhawks and from the Thunder Bay minor hockey league program, on the team as well.

Congratulations to them. Thunder Bay continues to produce amazing hockey talent on an annual basis. We're very proud of these people.

I need to also congratulate an old friend of mine, the assistant coach of the men's curling team, who didn't get a lot of notoriety while he was over there, but a former world champ in his own right, Ricky Lang. Rick, along with Al Hackner, won more than one world curling championship. Rick was the assistant coach for the men's gold-winning curling team as well.

Congratulations to all of the Thunder Bay gang and to everybody from—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Mauro: A fantastic turnout.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Two words: Wayne Gretzky.

MATT DUCHENE

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize local Olympian Matt Duchene. What can I say? In Sochi, Matt Duchene was part of the men's Olympic hockey team that won the gold medal. Together, they faced the best hockey players in the world to bring the gold medal back to Canada.

Born and raised in Haliburton, Ontario, by dedicated parents Vince and Christine, Matt is just one of several hockey players from this small town who have gone on to play in the NHL. At only 23 years old, Matt is a five-year veteran of the Colorado Avalanche after having been selected third overall in the 2009 NHL entry draft. Matt has worn the maple leaf in international play for Canada seven times, winning gold at the 2008 International Ice Hockey Federation under-18 championship, as well as part of Team Canada at the 2012 Spengler Cup.

It's also important to acknowledge Matt Duchene's commitment to his community. He spends much of his off season up in the Haliburton Highlands, meeting with young people, encouraging them, and donating his much-sought-after memorabilia—I have a signed sweater myself—to the many auctions and charities up in the riding. Last year, he and fellow NHLer Cody Hodgson hosted a golf tournament to support the Minden flood relief effort, which raised close to \$120,000 in a single day.

The town of Haliburton and all of the Haliburton Highlands could not be more proud of Matt and all that he has accomplished. On behalf of the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, I again congratulate Matt Duchene and Team Canada on winning Olympic gold in Sochi, and I wish him all the best for future success.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I rise today to offer my sincere congratulations to Canada's Olympic team in the recent Sochi games. Canada was represented by 221 athletes competing in 15 different winter sports. These remarkable athletes awed us with their hard-fought and inspirational performances.

In total, more than 2,800 athletes, coaches and team officials from 80 countries participated in this exciting event. Each and every one of them is to be congratulated for their dedication and commitment to sporting excellence.

My riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, specifically the town of Ilderton, is home ice to three Sochi

Olympians: ice dancing silver medallists Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue and, just heading over to Sochi, Canadian Paralympic curler Mark Ideson. Speaker, I can tell you that all of my riding and, indeed, all of Canada are extremely proud of the way Scott, Tessa and Mark have and will continue to represent Canada.

I was also pleased to join with Mark's family, friends and colleagues as part of his official send-off on Sunday afternoon at the Ilderton Curling Club. I can tell you that excitement for Mark and his rink is high, especially after the gold medal in curling we have already seen.

Canada is a top sports nation, and each of our athletes' performances is a reflection of our country's amazing athletic talent and national pride. On behalf of all MPPs, I would like to say that we are proud of you and the way you represented Canada.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, on a point of order: I just want to congratulate Mike Smith and Jayna Hefford for being on two Olympic gold medal teams in Canada.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Winter Olympics as well. Congratulations, Jayna and Mike.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do believe there is a rule that ministers don't get statements, but that's a sneaky way of getting it in there.

I do want to echo something, if you don't mind. We are all extremely proud of all of our athletes, the coaches, the supporters and the sponsors. We performed well, and I just wanted to make sure that everyone understood that we have to have pride in our own local athletes. It's a good thing to do, so congratulations to everybody.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to correct my record. In response to a question from the member from Toronto-Danforth on December 9, 2013, I cited \$6 billion in electricity export profits to Ontario since 2008, a figure that was supplied to me by the Independent Electricity System Operator. The IESO has since amended that calculation, and it is more accurate to say that Ontario has made \$4.4 billion in revenue since 2006. In 2013 alone, exports reduced costs for Ontarians by \$300 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My comment to that would be to shorten the corrected record, to ensure that, if you made a mistake in the comment, you simply correct that mistake. I would ask that all members abide by that request. When you do correct your record—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —it's to correct something that you said, and it's specific.

I don't need anyone making comments in the middle of my sentence. It's not going to happen anymore. Please.

It's a serious issue that when you do correct your record, it is something that you said, and you are correct—

ing it only and not making any other modifications or comments. I appreciate your fulfilling that request.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that, “The Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain offices on Thursday, November 21, 2013, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Office of the Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, and Ombudsman Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the estimates 2013-14 of these offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed received.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF TORONTO ALTERNATIVE VOTING SYSTEM ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ADOPTION D'UN SYSTÈME DE VOTE DE REMPLACEMENT PAR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO

Mr. Schein moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to allow the City of Toronto to adopt an alternative voting system / Projet de loi 163, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales afin de permettre à la cité de Toronto d'adopter un système de vote de remplacement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jonah Schein: My bill will give the city of Toronto the ability to determine how its representatives are elected. It will authorize the city of Toronto to pass a bylaw adopting an alternative voting system for the election of members of city council, including the mayor.

This reform was requested by a majority of Toronto city councillors, and it's important to our city and to my constituents. I'm pleased to introduce this bill and to show my support for this issue today.

SUPPLY ACT, 2014

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2014

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014 / Projet de loi 164, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Short statement?

Hon. Charles Sousa: No statement, Mr. Speaker.

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MINIMUM WAGE

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our government is committed to building a more prosperous Ontario, while creating the jobs of today and tomorrow and providing more opportunities for all.

I was proud to stand with the Premier recently to announce that our government is increasing the minimum wage to \$11 an hour on June 1 of this year. This will give Ontario the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada and build on our strong track record of rising living standards for workers.

It is important to remember that when we came to office, the minimum wage had been frozen for eight years straight. That was not fair to workers, who saw their cost of living increase while their wages stayed

frozen. That's why, Speaker, our government initially increased the minimum wage by 50%, starting in 2003.

Against the opposition's wishes, our government raised the minimum wage from \$6.85 to the \$10.25 it is today. We increased it during good times and during the depths of the recession because it was the right thing to do. Ontario went from having one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada to one of the highest because that's what hard-working Ontario families deserved. A look at the past 20 years shows us that decisions on minimum wage were too often ad hoc and left to the political whims of the day. That meant that the NDP increased minimum wage less than two dollars during their five years in office and the PC government failed to raise it one penny. That was not fair to workers who did not know what their hourly wage would be from one year to the next, and unpredictable for businesses who could not plan for the future.

That is why our government is introducing the Fair Minimum Wage Act. If passed, it will establish a fair, predictable and transparent approach to setting minimum wage in the future. This legislation will require all future adjustments to the minimum wage to be annual and tied to increases in Ontario's consumer price index. This would ensure that Ontario's minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living in a way that allows our businesses to plan for the future and continue to create jobs.

Tying minimum wage to the change in Ontario's annual CPI was one of the recommendations in the consensus report put forward by Ontario's Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. The panel, which included representatives from business, labour, community and anti-poverty groups, travelled across the province to get advice and feedback from Ontarians on all sides of the issue. It travelled to 10 cities and heard over 400 submissions from businesses large and small, organized labour, community and anti-poverty groups, and others on this important topic.

I would like to thank Professor Anil Verma and all the members of the panel for their dedication on this report and all their hard work in getting us to this point. We will be acting on all of the panel's thorough and thoughtful recommendations. This means that, if passed, the first CPI adjustment would take effect on October 1, 2015, and would be announced by April 1, 2015. This would give both workers and businesses six months to plan, and all future annual changes to the minimum wage would use the same schedule. Any changes would be rounded to the nearest five cents, and there will be no decreases.

In addition, our proposed legislation would, if passed, put in place a five-year review of the minimum wage and how it is set. As I mentioned, the advisory panel met with over 400 business, labour and community groups who represent thousands more members, business owners and Ontario families. It was disappointing, however, that neither of the opposition parties made a presentation or submission to the panel nor spoke up on this topic during question period. They chose not to participate when they had the chance.

Increasing the minimum wage and establishing a fair and predictable way of setting it in the future is part of the government's economic plan that is creating jobs for today and tomorrow. The comprehensive plan and its six priorities focus on Ontario's greatest strength: its people and strategic partnerships.

One of the ways we are working to create and attract good jobs and help families is by setting a fair and balanced minimum wage. Raising the minimum wage to \$11 on June 1 of this year will help improve the standard of living for hard-working people across the province. Those working on minimum wage will not see their wages fall below the cost of living again. If passed, our legislation would take setting minimum wage out of the hands of politicians and provide predictability and certainty to businesses to stay competitive and create jobs.

Raising the minimum wage and calling for an annual increase tied to the cost of living would put more money in people's pockets. It would also give our businesses predictability and help build a more prosperous economy, while ensuring a fair society for all. I hope that all parties in the House will support this very important legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the important issue of minimum wage, and I thank the minister for his statement here this afternoon.

Members of this House will be hearing that many businesses are scrambling in preparation for the minimum wage hike to come on June 1 of this year. In fact, many are reporting having to scale back on hours or even cutting jobs. I've heard from businesses and job creators throughout Ontario and from my riding in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and I can tell you that few are prepared to weather this change.

1530

This change brings about concerns, as it will have the biggest direct impact on important industries, such as food services, where there's a large number of minimum wage workers. The increase comes at a time when a lot of employers will be getting ready to hire a new wave of seasonal workers, and it will be a challenge for them to determine whether they are able to hire at the same rate they did in previous years with this increase in payroll costs. Businesses will also need to be prepared for additional costs beyond the new minimum wage, as there will be additional payroll taxes and costs that businesses have yet to bear because of the higher minimum wage.

We know that minimum wage increases do little to improve the financial situation of low-income workers. While small businesses understand and often support the government's efforts to reduce poverty amongst its workers, minimum wage hikes are not the most effective option. Ever since 2004, Ontario workers have faced an uphill battle against the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government. The rate of Ontario residents working in minimum-wage jobs has gone up from 6.3% in 2007 to 8.1% in 2009, and now, currently, it has increased all the

way up to 9%, an increase that is now almost triple the amount it was under the former PC government in 2003.

Under the former PC record, our party has shown dramatic decreases in the rate of workers in minimum wage jobs, at 4.6% in 2000, 4.1% in 2001, 3.9% in 2002 and 3.5% in 2003. The facts speak for themselves, and it's evident that the current path that this government has taken Ontario down has put our economy in a downward spiral. We need to change direction immediately.

Our PC leader, Tim Hudak, has put forward his Million Jobs Act. If passed, this legislation will immediately begin its task of creating good jobs. Our plan is focused on getting people more than the minimum wage, specifically, paycheques for people with none at all and full-time employment for those who are settling for part-time.

There are over 1 million people out of work in Ontario today. We have lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the past 10 years. I can tell you that these changes today will do nothing to change that. These changes are nothing more than window dressing because, of course, the government has yet to unveil any sort of a comprehensive jobs plan.

While we can support the specific legislation that will have minimum wage tied to inflation, it fails to address the issues affecting Ontario residents and their future long-term prosperity. Ontario workers don't want to be stuck in minimum-wage jobs. They deserve and want jobs with good wages that will allow them to support themselves and their families.

An increase to the minimum wage does nothing to establish long-term economic security and happiness. We want to focus on good, well-paying jobs that people in this province can depend on.

I again thank the minister for his announcement today, and would use the balance of my time to urge him to dedicate his most urgent and most serious attention to working on and releasing a comprehensive and detailed jobs plan with this Premier, a plan so that Ontario workers can know where you are going and a plan so that our businesses and job creators are able to properly plan and account for the direction this Liberal government is taking us.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the new Ontario New Democratic caucus as our party's leader to provide a response to the minister's announcement. Earlier today, the Minister of Labour put forward the government's position. Now I'll make a case for a more balanced approach.

New Democrats have a solid plan for investing in our workforce and for strengthening our economy. Our plan will deliver results by increasing the minimum wage while at the same time cutting small-business taxes. Instead of springing this idea in the middle of a by-election for political gain, New Democrats took the time to talk to people and businesses across our province that will be affected by the upgrades to the minimum wage. This is a reasonable and economically feasible plan that

will ensure that hard-working families are fairly compensated without putting any undue burden on small businesses. It's not only about raising Ontario's minimum wage, Speaker. It is about growing Ontario's economy.

For the last 10 years, this government has put the squeeze on the middle class in Ontario. There's no doubt that families are struggling. They're struggling here in Toronto, they're struggling in my home riding in Essex, and they're struggling in every corner of our province. So we've reached out. We've listened, and we've heard from single moms trying to raise their kids on minimum wage. We've heard from new Canadians and young people who can't make ends meet, and we've have heard from small business owners across the province who need a willing partner in government.

We know that small business is the engine of our local economies and we need to help small businesses to create jobs. We need to help people make ends meet. So our plan calls on the minimum wage to increase to \$11 an hour this June, and following it with a 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$11.50 on June 1, 2015, and a 50-cent increase to \$12 an hour on June 1, 2016, with an annual cost-of-living increase. However, Speaker, we'll balance this increase with a reduction in the small business tax rate, a reduction from 4.5% this June 1 to 4%, a reduction from 4% to 3.5% June 1, 2015, and a further reduction from 3.5% to 3% on June 1, 2016.

Speaker, this is an economically responsible plan that will take steps to help lift Ontarians out of poverty, but it's not an easy solution. It's not easy for people living on minimum wage to pay the bills and to put food on the table. It's not easy for small business owners to make payroll and to make their contribution to Ontario's economy. Government will have to set stronger priorities in order to help small businesses and lower the tax rate.

The Minister of Labour talked about Liberal timelines and Liberal priorities earlier this afternoon. Instead of taking care of political needs of this government, they should try considering the needs of Ontarians. It's time to put people first. New Democrats are listening, and we're putting forward a responsible measure that will make life more affordable and help put people back to work in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition here on behalf of my constituents. It reads as follows:

For improved post-stroke physiotherapy eligibility:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of

20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens" themselves;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65"—and over—"to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment" process.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and send it to the table with Ibrahim.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: This is a petition from my riding of Ajax-Pickering.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

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"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I agree with that. I attach my name to it, and I will pass it to Samer.

LCBO OUTLET

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

Brought to me by local Councillor Gord James from the city of Kawartha Lakes.

FIREFIGHTERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes to me from Mark Lalonde in and around the Petawawa area, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas firefighters are routinely exposed to burning chemicals and other toxins in the course of protecting the lives and property of fellow citizens; and

"Whereas even with the best respiratory practices and protective equipment, exposures will continue to occur due to absorption through the skin once a firefighter has become soaked during fire suppression activities; and

"Whereas epidemiological, medical and scientific studies conclusively demonstrate an increased rate of diseases such as cancer in firefighters versus the general population;

They "petition the Legislative Assembly" as follows:

"Amend the regulations of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA), 1997 to include cancer of the lungs, breasts, testicles, prostate, skin and multiple myeloma in presumptive legislation for occupational diseases related to firefighting."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Jaclyn to bring it to the Clerk.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr. Joe Dickson: In support of the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, I also have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown

LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

I agree with the petition, will sign it and pass it to Robin.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with Meera.

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: This petition was given to me from the Village of Wentworth Heights, which is a long-term-care facility in my riding, and it reads:

"Whereas seniors living in long-term-care homes in Ontario receive an inadequate food allowance; and

"Whereas the food allowance in Ontario's long-term-care homes has only marginally increased since 2007; and

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act states that every licensee of a long-term-care home shall ensure that there is an organized program of nutrition care and

dietary services for the home to meet the daily nutritional needs of the residents; and

"Whereas the current funding model of \$7.68 per day does not allow for necessities that are mandated under the act such as adequate therapeutic diets or nutritional supplements;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase the daily food allowance for seniors in long-term care to \$11 per day."

I couldn't agree with this more. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Aqil to bring to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is a petition to fund Avalon Public School II in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School in Orléans is 732 students, with 11 portables onsite;

"Whereas under current projections, by 2014, enrolment at the Avalon Public School is forecast to be in the 900 range, increasing to approximately 1,359 students by 2022;

"Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space threatens the OCDSB's ability to offer full-day kindergarten in Avalon under the Ministry of Education's targets;

"Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

"Whereas the staff of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, following an objective, evidence-based process, recommended Avalon PS II as its top priority for a new school, calling the need 'urgent';

"Whereas the board disregarded independent staff counsel and ranked the school from number 1 to number 7;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build Avalon Public School II in the next round of capital projects."

It's signed by Marie France Lalonde, Katherine Winters and many others. I will send it forward with Thomas.

UTILITY CHARGES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Premier and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 398(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001 (the 'act'), allows a municipality to add public utility arrears incurred by a tenant to the municipal tax bill of the owner; and

"Whereas Ontario regulation 581/06 permits such arrears to have priority lien status under the act; and

"Whereas these provisions reversed the long-standing law in this area that held that a landlord was not

responsible for utility charges where the landlord was not the consumer; and

“Whereas landlords may now be burdened unfairly, and potentially catastrophically, with fees and charges they have no control over; and

“Whereas these provisions will also impact tenants who are not in arrears with their utility payments but who will now face rent increases and/or increases in utility payments where such payments are pooled as landlords attempt to recoup these outstanding liabilities; and

“Whereas a number of municipalities, including Penetanguishene, Bracebridge and Niagara Falls, have reversed such policies as a result of the demonstrated and unprecedented negative impacts on landlords and tenants; and

“Whereas municipalities and utility providers in Ontario already have at their disposal a number of means by which they can control or collect outstanding arrears, including by requiring deposits for the utility service pursuant to the Public Utilities Act and by seizing personal property in the possession of the ratepayer;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Repeal section 398(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, and amend Ontario regulation 581/06 accordingly, to ensure that property owners are not responsible for the payment of outstanding utility arrears where they are not the consumer.”

I sign my name to this and hand it to page Alessia.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEMENTIALLY DISABLED

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“December 9, 2013, was a precedent-setting day in this Legislature for Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens. Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a heartfelt and official apology challenging all Ontarians ‘to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else’ when she publicly, on behalf of the people of Ontario, took responsibility for the profound suffering of the former residents of Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres ‘who were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences.’

1550

“Whereas the institutional model of care at each of these centres has been acknowledged in the public apology to have been deeply flawed whereby residents ‘suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care’; and

“Whereas it was acknowledged that former residents ‘were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity’; and

“Whereas all of the class actions for former residents at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres

have reached settlement agreements with the province for a combined total of \$67.7 million; and

“Whereas a \$67.7-million settlement is wholly inadequate as compensation to the thousands of former residents and their families to redress the long-term debilitating impact of this harm; and

“Whereas all legal costs of \$15.6 million are being taken from the combined settlement total before any compensation is paid to the former residents;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We ask that Premier Kathleen Wynne be led by her sense of moral purpose and use her power as Premier to pay the legitimate legal costs of Koskie Minsky LLP from Toronto who acted on behalf of the Huronia, Southwestern and Rideau Regional Centre class members, from sources over and above the combined \$67.7-million settlement.”

I sign my signature to this petition and give it to page Kiranpreet.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: Another petition to fund Avalon Public School II:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School in Orléans is 732 students, with 11 portables onsite;

“Whereas under current projections, by 2014, enrolment at the Avalon Public School is forecast to be in the 900 range increasing to approximately 1,359 students by 2022;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space threatens the OCDSB’s ability to offer full-day kindergarten in Avalon under the Ministry of Education’s targets;

“Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

“Whereas the staff of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, following an objective, evidence-based process, recommended Avalon PS II as its top priority for a new school, calling the need ‘urgent’;

“Whereas the board disregarded independent staff counsel and ranked the school from number 1 to number 7;

“We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build Avalon Public School II in the next round of capital projects.”

I have this signed by Patricia Joyce, Melanie Vinette and seven others. I’ll sign the petition and send it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 18, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Windsor West.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Windsor—Tecumseh, Speaker.

It is an honour to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of the town of Tecumseh and the city of Windsor on any occasion, and on this bill, Bill 141. It's my intention to continue with my lead, which I had started last week. I had to break for time on Bill 141.

But first, I'd like to join those who earlier paid tribute to my good friend Graham Murray, who is in the audience this afternoon and who will be honoured at Queen's Park later this afternoon. As you all know, Graham is the publisher of Inside Queen's Park.

When I finished the last time, I was reminiscing about how the minister started his introduction to this bill. He was talking about how, when he put together his speaking notes, he was channeling Bill Davis, a former Conservative Premier, and he spoke of the vision that Mr. Davis had for infrastructure in Ontario. The minister said his bill would be actionable, it would be measurable and it would be transparent. The minister used the Herb Gray Parkway, which we are all very familiar with now in this House, as a shining example of how the P3 partnerships are going forward in the province of Ontario. His bill is to embellish those partnerships.

I ended last week—I started to remind us all of some of the lessons we've learned the hard way from the Herb Gray Parkway. As I recall, the contract was given out, basically, to a European consortium. They bid on it in a major bundle and then part of what they did was pass along any risks involved with that to the local contractors.

Of course, over the course of time, we found out that girders being manufactured for use in that parkway were not considered safe, and the work had to be delayed. An expert panel was brought in by the minister to examine the whole affair, and the expert panel found that the girders were not up to Ontario standards. They were built without CSA approval and standards. The work was stopped and, unfortunately, the contractor stopped paying his bills at that time as well.

On the advice of the expert panel that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation had assembled, the minister did the right thing, and the only thing he could

do, really. For reasons of public safety, he ordered the hundreds of those deficient girders to be removed. Now, the government has told us here in the House that this will be done at no cost to Ontario taxpayers. However, had this work been tendered under the more traditional method, not the P3 method, the ministry and Infrastructure Ontario would have retained the ability to get the test results of the girder manufacturing process as the work progressed. Those who were paying the bills, meaning the government, the ministry, Infrastructure Ontario, would have had quality control and supervision over that project. The sloppy work on the girders would have been detected and corrected thanks to independent testing.

Now that, to me, was the biggest failure of the Herb Gray example. That should be corrected in Bill 141 because, as we now know, under this system quality control was missing, supervision was lacking, independent testing was scarce, and the results of those tests were not given to the ministry but to the big money men who put the bid in, who were supposedly policing themselves. Someone was not looking out for the best interests of the taxpayers on this project. To repeat that, no one was looking out for the best interests of the taxpayers.

This brings me to a critical point in this discussion. I can't say it more clearly than this, that the sad, unfortunate, inexcusable fact is that the government has failed to protect the small business people who were asked to supply goods and services to this big multinational company that was handed the contract for this huge project, the biggest infrastructure road-building project in the history of our great province.

I know the private member's bill being brought forward by the member from Vaughn, the prompt payment bill, may assist in projects in the future, but it does little for what has already taken place.

The minister can promise, as he has, that Bill 141 will see infrastructure projects in this province more transparent in the future, but let's look at what we've learned from the mistakes of the Herb Gray example.

1600

Small business owners, small companies in Windsor Essex county and Kent county, and local suppliers feel that they've been hosed by this government. The way the government signed off on this contract has cost the government its credibility with the local suppliers who are working on the Herb Gray Parkway. Suppliers can't understand why, nor do they accept that, the government paying the bills for the project claims it has no ability to insist that the foreign contractors doing the work actually pay the bills that are owed to the local suppliers.

The money for this project comes from Ontario taxpayers. It's collected by this government. It's doled out in increments to the foreign multinational companies which the government selected to do the work. These multinational companies have a duty and an obligation to pay their bills. Yet when one of them says no, when they stop paying their bills, hanging a host of local companies out to dry, the government refuses to step in.

Hotham Building Materials is owed more than \$100,000, and they've been owed that money since last August. Jake's Crane is owed almost \$100,000, Waltron Trailers in Ridgetown \$50,000, R.J. Cyr nearly \$15,000, and the list goes on and on. Despite assurances that the minister was on top of the situation, the banks keep calling the suppliers expressing concerns. The employees keep looking for assurances that their jobs will be secure and that they'll still be able to put food on their tables.

This, to me, is a matter of principle: the principle that, in Ontario, small business people, when doing business with the government of the day—this government—will be treated fairly and that they will be fairly compensated. They should not have to resort to expensive legal action to force this government to stand up for the little guys, to stand up for the rights of people who did everything that was asked of them: to supply quality goods and services in a timely fashion and at a good price. They've been asking since last fall—all they've been asking is to be paid what is owed to them.

Specific to Bill 141, this failure has everything to do with the construction method that was chosen for this project. If it can happen in Windsor, it can happen on every major construction project in the future. That's why people on the council of construction trades have serious concerns about the way the government tenders infrastructure projects these days.

Speaker, let me quote from a news release issued by Jim Lyons. He represents the Heavy Construction Association of Windsor. "Why, might you ask, on a government of Ontario construction project, should the risk be so high to subcontractors engaged on this project? The answer, quite simply, is that the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Infrastructure have tendered this project under provisions of an alternative financial procurement (AFP) design, build, finance and maintain (DBFM) method, where risk transferred to the successful bidder is extremely high.

"Unfortunately, such risk transfer, assumed by the Windsor Essex Mobility Group and their constructor partner, Parkway Infrastructure Constructors (PIC) is being passed on to all subcontractors and suppliers who are willing to take on such a risk."

This memo was written before the problems arose with the unpaid bills.

Six concerns were raised by the Heavy Construction Association over the AFP/DBFM method:

Contract tenders are very poor in terms of drawing and specification content, forcing bidders to qualify their tenders;

Subcontract tender results are not being shared with all bidders, and this is not how the Ministry of Transportation would normally handle such tenders;

Bidders are actually being asked to negotiate lower prices, and then these new prices are being shopped to other bidders to achieve more savings;

Awards of tenders are too lengthy, forcing bidders to forgo bidding on other work;

Holdbacks for all contract packages are being withheld, in some cases for the entire project duration—

there are no considerations for early release of holdback monies;

The contracts in this case have been very onerous and complicated, with tie-ins to the consortia contracts, which are 800 pages or more. The Heavy Construction Association of Windsor asks, "What's wrong with using the old CCDC contracts?" We all want our best bang for the buck, but 800-page contracts to local suppliers, small companies wanting to bid, wanting to help out, wanting to secure employment for their people in their region—they are being forced to go out and find a lawyer and help them negotiate through 800 pages just to put in a bid on some supplies.

For these reasons, many local—and, for that matter, other provincial and national—companies are shying away from bidding on such work.

Mr. Lyons goes on to say that what should have been a fairly straightforward MTO contract has turned into a very risky prospect.

Now, as the minister knows, Mr. Lyons is a member of the Infrastructure Ontario task force to address these concerns with the DBDM development model. The Council of Ontario Construction Associations represents 31 mixed trade and trade contractors' associations throughout Ontario. They all have serious concerns with the way this government has been creating unintended hardships for their industry.

I'm guessing that what the minister is proposing is in front of us because various stakeholders in the construction field have indicated to the government that they had similar serious concerns. Those concerns would flow from the way the government moved away from traditional methods of putting projects out to tender a few years ago. This jump or shift to the AFP or P3 projects and the bundling of traditionally financed projects has sidelined many in the industry. That's because their companies can't compete; they are too small. They are too small to compete on the same scale as the trans-global consortia which have swept in from Europe and elsewhere and gobbled up many of the major construction projects in Ontario.

New Democrats have fundamental problems with the government's P3 model of infrastructure, which realistically, I suppose, we did not believe would be addressed in the legislation. However, based on published reports, there was some reason to believe that this legislation would deal with at least some of the issues that various construction stakeholders were raising with us, and were raising with the minister as well.

So at first glance, what do we see? All broader public sector entities must consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions related to infrastructure. These principles include things such as taking a long-term view: "Decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of ... demographic and economic trends in Ontario." Let me repeat that. "Decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of ... demographic and economic trends in Ontario." I wait

with bated breath to have that explained in depth at some point. I've read it a few times, and I still need help with that.

1610

So let's see. The Minister of Infrastructure must, from time to time, develop a 10-year infrastructure plan providing a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs and a strategy to meet those needs, and that's a good thing. I guess some of us would have expected that that was already happening, and I guess it hasn't been happening or we wouldn't be here today discussing the need for this to be put into the legislation.

Further, when this long-term infrastructure plan is being developed, it must be made public. Again, that's a good thing, a very good thing. As we in this House are always saying, we believe in open and transparent government. At least we in the NDP have been saying that all along for some time.

When evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects, the government must consider a specified list of criteria. Criteria to be assessed before construction of new infrastructure assets would include such things as whether the project fits in with existing municipal planning documents. Again, that's a good thing. As we all know, too often our municipal partners feel the province doesn't give their concerns much weight or consideration. I know when I was at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association yesterday, we heard quite a bit from our municipal partners about what their concerns are. They think they should have more input on a regional level, on a local level, into some of the decision-making going on up here.

Now, I know there will be more details to follow as this bill gets to a committee and discussions are held with the various stakeholders; for instance, the requirement that architects and other design professionals relating to infrastructure must be involved in the design of our new infrastructure projects. That might set the stage for more creative approaches and more interesting designs to buildings, bridges and railway underpasses, for example.

The legislation will require that certain numbers of apprentices will be employed on these future projects and in their maintenance afterward. Obviously, the building tradespeople will have much to say about this. I anticipate they'll be discussing ratios on year-one apprentices with years two, three, four and five and journeymen and how these apprentices can be moved from one project or one site to another so as to broaden their education and their experience. The last thing we would want is somebody working for two or three years on an infrastructure project in Ontario as an apprentice just doing the same thing day in and day out and not getting that broader experience that would be required to have a better-trained professional at the end of the day.

I've heard government officials describe this new requirement for apprentice involvement as a living legacy which stays in the community after the work is done. So on the one hand, the community gets the new hospital or the college or the bridge, which remains in the com-

munity—it's part of the infrastructure—and on the other hand, the project helped create a new batch of skilled tradespeople, who are now, under the right conditions, where jobs are there, ready, willing and able to work on future projects in their community. They've been trained as apprentices. They're there. The work is there. They can take it. That's the living legacy.

Again, I look forward to learning more from the construction industry, especially the union leadership, on how they see this unfolding across the province.

I note in the act that the ministry must consult with relevant stakeholders before a regulation is adopted. That's, again, a good thing—consultation with relevant stakeholders.

I mentioned I was at the ROMA-OGRA conference yesterday, and we talked to a number of delegations. When it comes to infrastructure, they're most certainly interested in speaking to this government about the infrastructure around broadband, about opening up the World Wide Web, if you will, with high-speed Internet into rural areas in this province.

When you talk to the farmers in this province, they're mostly interested in talking to the government about infrastructure projects surrounding the extension and expansion of the natural gas pipelines across Ontario, so they can get natural gas going out to their farms so they can lower their hydro costs and become more proficient and efficient in their farming operations—major infrastructure projects that they'd like to be dealing with, and they probably will be speaking to the government on this bill when they have the opportunity.

Speaker, shortly after the bill was introduced, I met with a representative from the construction association in the greater Sudbury area. He and others in northern Ontario want nothing to do with the government's new P3 model. They scrape out a living with more traditional methods up north. There are hundreds of construction companies in the north, but not on the same scale as those in the Toronto area, and certainly not in the same pool as their multinational, transglobal consortia that bid with ease on the P3s.

If the minister cares about the north, if he cares about jobs and cares about future employment levels, he will keep the construction bids in northern Ontario in small, bite-sized pieces. That's what they tell me. They've asked me to ask the government to do the northern work in phases. Now, you might do it at \$100 million and maybe even \$200 million, but, that way, the companies in the north can afford to bid on the work and keep their employees on the job.

They told me about one example during my northern tour as infrastructure critic, and that was when the government tendered out the construction of 10 OPP stations. Instead of doing it one station at a time, they put them in a bundle and put them up for tender. The company that won the bid, in this case, was from Toronto. I'm not saying the process wasn't fair by any means—don't get me wrong on that—but the Toronto company brought up most of the workers with them. I can

understand that. That may have been good for a few motels and restaurants in the north, but it didn't help the labourers and skilled tradespeople in the north when construction of those 10 OPP stations went on. They were pretty well shut out of it.

Another point that was raised was the need for more input from the contractors on the board of Infrastructure Ontario. I know you need your lawyers, your bankers and all that, but, Minister, it would help if there were more people on the board with some real, hands-on construction experience—small, medium and large contractors all bring different and valuable experience and insight. For example, just in one region, there are more than 50 contractors in the greater Sudbury area employing between 10,000 to 15,000 people, depending on the season.

In summary, we in the NDP look forward to working with the minister on Bill 141, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity, but at this point, we say that our support is cautious in nature at this time. We feel Bill 141 could be improved. There is a decent foundation to the bill, but we feel the government should take into account the views expressed by the stakeholders. The construction associations certainly would like to see more meat on the bones, so to speak, and we in the NDP take our role very seriously. We're working in a minority government situation, understanding that the three parties need to co-operate on such matters. We respect the legislative process, and we respect the views of our colleagues on all sides of the House. That's why we look forward to this bill advancing through the legislative process. Again, what a privilege to be afforded time to speak on the bill today in this House, and especially on the day after our jobs champion, Wayne Gates, from Niagara Falls, was introduced to the House.

1620

Speaker, when I was doing some research on this, I went on the Internet and found a blog. It's called rabble.ca. We're talking about P3s, Speaker.

"P3s are big business:"—according to this site—"Canadian governments closed deals on a reported \$7 billion in P3 contracts in both 2010 and 2011. This was the highest in the world in 2010 and second only to France in 2011.... We're well above the US, Australia and even the UK, which had been a world leader before their PFI program imploded....

"While Canada may be one of the leaders in the market for P3s, we're far from a leader when it comes to transparency, assessment and accounting for P3s." According to this site, "P3s are already a murky business when it comes to financial transparency—and we're close to the bottom of that pool. The value-for-money assessments used to justify P3s in Canada are simply not credible for a number of reasons," according to this site.

"Early P3s in Canada were often used by governments mainly to shift their debt off-book....

"All the Canadian P3s I've seen in the past decade or so" according to the author, Toby Sanger, "have been justified on the basis that they transfer large amounts of

risk to the private sector." But "every single P3 project was justified on the basis of value-for-money assessments that claimed P3s transferred large amounts of risk from the public to the private sector.

"The average amount of risk calculated for these projects was almost half"—about 49%—"the base project costs. For some projects, the value of the 'risk' calculated amounted to over 80% of the base project cost, averaged over \$100 million for each of the 28 projects and over \$3 billion in total. That's a lot of money, no matter how you count it. Just to be clear: Not one of these P3s would be justified on the basis of the central value-for-money assessments without this assumption that large amounts of risk were transferred to the private sector."

"But how is this risk calculated? They don't say." The government doesn't say. "The value-for-money risk assessment templates Infrastructure Ontario provides are frankly" according to this author, "embarrassing from a public policy perspective, especially for decisions that have involved billions of dollars of the public's money. There's no evidence provided for any of the numbers proposed in their risk matrix—and other provinces are no better. The value-for-money assessments released for each P3 project are superficial window dressing that provide none of the details necessary for an independent assessment. And in the instances where auditors have reviewed the actual finances of P3s, they've generally always found that the project would have cost less if it were publicly financed and not run as a P3. The way risk is calculated for specific P3s may be more sophisticated and complicated but there's very little transparency: They hold risk workshops where people apparently come up with numbers adding up to tens and hundreds of millions of dollars, but nothing is revealed about the specifics."

The article says that "the real risk the private sector assumes through a P3 is limited by the net amount of unsecured money they have put into the project. The amount is represented by the equity they provide and any net cash they have committed, less funds received. The initial equity share of the cost of P3s is usually no more than 10% to 15% and sometimes as low as 8% or less. Since P3s are invariably set up as 'special purpose vehicles' ... the big companies behind them can simply walk away if they aren't making" enough money or "enough profit or if things go wrong, thanks to limited liability laws for corporations. The maximum they lose is any equity and any net cash they've put in, less what they've been paid. And a number of P3 companies have abandoned the projects or used the threat of doing so to get more money out of the government.

"Government always bears the ultimate risk because it's ultimately responsible for delivering the service. This is a fact that seems to be ignored in these P3 risk assessments. The government can then end up being responsible for paying off the bond holders, whose money is secured through the asset and project agreements. As we saw with the Ontario gas plants scandal that led to former Premier McGuinty's resignation, the cost of paying off the bond holders (in that case, hedge funds based in the

US and Cayman Islands) can amount to many times the actual cost of the project. And as that example shows, P3s often magnify the risk for the public sector, instead of reducing and transferring it."

Speaker, there's a lot left unsaid in the bill that was introduced. In many ways, it's the bare bones; it's an empty shell without having all the content and context that needs to be provided, and we hope it will be provided at some point. At this point, I believe, on our side of the House, we're willing to see where it goes. We will proceed with caution as the bill makes its progress through the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his comments, and I want to thank him for his cautious support, because I should hate to have reckless support from anybody for such a thoughtful bill. Cautious support is most welcome, and we thank him for that.

Speaker, at its most basic, this bill is about long-term planning. It's something that this government is already doing, and what this proposed legislation does is just formalizing it.

As many of you may know, one of the criteria that the Ministry of Infrastructure now has, before it approves any funding to any municipality, is that the municipality must have an asset-management plan. So what we are asking municipalities to do, the province is saying we're going to do ourselves as well; that is, we're going to plan for the long term—and I cannot imagine that there is much that can be criticized for the idea.

I did hear the member from Windsor–Tecumseh speak at length about the public-private partnership, although I'm not entirely sure how that fits into the idea of long-term planning in general. There are pros and cons for the PPP model, but I think that takes away from the real intent of what this bill is, which is about ensuring that any money that is spent on infrastructure is spent on infrastructure that is planned at least for the next 10 years. My favourite example: It's a waste of taxpayer money if you first fix the roads and then you tear them up because you realize you have to fix the water pipes under them. If you have a plan, you know that in two years the pipes have to be replaced, so can we wait and resurface the road at the same time? That's the sort of thing we are talking about, but on a more sophisticated and comprehensive level.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has two minutes.

1630

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour, again, to talk with regard to Bill 141, in reference to my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh. This is Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. As a caucus, we've reviewed this. We would like to support it, but again, it's subject to what I would call caucus discussion. We need some more information on it.

We do support some of the principles in this particular bill. For example, the need for long-term planning is a

definite for infrastructure. Infrastructure should also be prioritized based on a specific list of criteria. I will actually be addressing in greater length this afternoon, if time permits, my further thoughts on this Bill 141 as well. Also, we support in principle the fact that—the current state of government-owned infrastructure assets and that the government should, in fact, publish a 10-year plan that sets out anticipated infrastructure needs.

To me, it's all about planning. If you don't plan ahead, then you're going to find yourself all of a sudden at a point of, "Where's the money going to come from? What has to happen? What are we going to do?" One of the things that I'm very concerned about is the fact that this legislation actually fails to mandate any specific measures that would, in fact, enable practical implementation of what we call the proposed principles. So we do have some concerns about this as well.

As we proceed further in debate with this particular bill, I think we need to proceed with caution as we continue to review this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his detailed presentation and some of the insights he brought to the debate today based on his experience in Windsor with the Herb Grey Parkway. When we are looking at issues like this that are so critical to the future of our province and the livelihood of the people who live in our province, having a reference point that is based in some real experience with infrastructure projects is really helpful.

Some of the issues he raised are quite alarming. He talked about the lack of protection for small business people in his community who were involved in the construction of that Herb Grey Parkway. I can't imagine what it would mean to a small building supply company, a crane company, to have \$100,000 owed to them by the government after they've already performed the work, after they've already hired the staff to do the work. What are the implications for the business?

I think that, ultimately, what the member reinforced in his comments was about the need to uphold the principle of fair treatment by government. When government embarks on infrastructure projects, there have to be fundamental principles that the government adheres to and fundamentally fair ways of dealing with the people who are involved in the project.

Some of the other things he mentioned were also of concern, and I will talk more about that later.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon following the remarks of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, whose remarks I listened to quite intently. I thought they were well thought out. It's hard to speak for that length of time and remain on topic, and I think that for the most part he did. He had some very constructive remarks and some criticisms that may be fair or may not be fair but certainly formed a good part of the debate.

Prior to serving as an MPP, I spent 18 years on regional council. I served under a Liberal government, under a Conservative government and under the Bob Rae government with the New Democrats. During that period of time, obviously, our population in the GTA and around the province was growing quite significantly. To be honest with you—and I think this was reflected by a number of people on local councils around the province, a number of mayors and regional chairs—I don't think the planning we did was the best planning we could have done. That was probably due to a number of factors, but certainly it seemed to me that it was a lot of very short-term planning, and a lot of it was sort of "flavour of the month" planning.

I think what's being proposed by Bill 141, the underlying concept of this bill, should meet with the approval of all three parties in this House. I think when you look at the five key components of the bill, it's long-term planning. I can't imagine anybody could argue with that. The principles that are being espoused by the bill ask that those people who are making the decisions consider key principles such as new technology, protecting the environment and others; that projects are prioritized; and that we promote design excellence in public works. Some of the architecture we're seeing today is probably not as good as it could be and, of course, we know the importance of skilled training. If we can include that in our own infrastructure programs, I think that is something that serves us all positively.

I would hope all members would support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): The member from Windsor-Tecumseh has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and may I add that you look very good in that chair this afternoon.

Thank you to the members from Mississauga East-Cooksville, Chatham-Kent-Essex, London West and Oakville. Thank you for letting me know that my cautious support was not a reckless support, and I would like to think that any support for your government at this time would be appreciated.

I will add, when you talked about digging up the roads—and that's part of the P3 problem, if you will—we've seen in our municipalities, where we've paved the roads and then the utilities people come along, dig it up and fix the sewer or whatever. What we're finding now on the Herb Gray Parkway is that the P3 partnership has gone ahead and done work on the municipal drainage system along the parkway without getting prior approval, without having that work get the stamp of approval from the municipal engineers and from the conservation authority and any other number of people.

So there is interference with a well-thought-out drainage scheme, that is now being interfered with without approval, without the people that had the original plans and the scheme put in place for flood prevention; the work has just gone ahead. As an afterthought, they say, "Oh, maybe we should have gotten approval first." Well, hello, maybe you should have.

That is why it is necessary, if you're dealing with a P3 project, to involve the municipalities; always think of the municipal work, if you're doing work in a municipality. But thank you for raising that issue.

Speaker, again, thank you for the time accorded to me this afternoon to speak on this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): Further debate? The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I might add, as well, that it's nice to see you in the Speaker's chair this afternoon.

It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and to, in fact, debate Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. This bill, as a matter of fact, deals with an issue that impacts every single Ontarian on a daily basis, but it's often overlooked. Bill 141 seeks to put in place the requirement that ministers create and update long-term infrastructure plans, grounding their planning in evidence-based policy.

During the minister's opening remarks, he stated that the objectives of this bill are to support job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and to incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning. These are objectives that the official opposition supports wholeheartedly.

But our political system often leads to a lack of long-term thinking as parties are more focused on, perhaps, re-election than they are with effective public policy. There are plenty of examples of governments ignoring what is needed in the future to save their skins today.

For its part, Bill 141 looks to take some of the partisanship out of infrastructure policy and planning. The people in our ridings don't care about political games and partisanship. No, they don't. They care about things like the condition of their drinking water systems, the conditions of their highways and reliable waste water management.

1640

Over the past few months, throughout the GTA, streets and homes flooded as sewers backed up. I might add, Speaker, it wasn't just in the GTA. But why did this happen? Because the critically important infrastructure was ignored and allowed to fall into disrepair. While the storms that hit this province were, perhaps, once-in-a-generation events, that is exactly what long-term planning should take into account well before disaster strikes.

Madam Speaker, infrastructure planning and investment is a subject that has gained a lot of attention in my great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. Last year, it was announced that the municipality of Chatham-Kent is facing—read my lips—a \$19-million infrastructure deficit. In Chatham-Kent alone, there are over 828 bridges that are three metres or more in width. Additionally, there are over 20,000 culverts in the municipality of Chatham-Kent. Needless to say, there is plenty of infrastructure in my riding that requires a lot of expensive maintenance. I might add that Chatham-Kent is having a tough time keeping up. "Why?" you might ask. I'm glad you asked that question. It's perhaps because there has

been a lack of a manufacturing tax base, resulting in a lack of jobs, all of which pay taxes to help pay for infrastructure.

One way to help with this provincially would be to change how we give out gas tax revenue. There's a novel idea. Currently, gas tax revenue is only distributed to municipalities with public transportation systems, even though everybody pays for it. As Ontario's largest rural municipality with the largest number of bridges, Chatham-Kent's infrastructure costs are much more significant than its transit costs. For less-populated municipalities, highways and bridges are the public transportation, and it's only fair—only fair—that they receive their share of revenues from the gas tax to maintain them.

My colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—that's a mouthful—introduced a private member's bill that sought to fix this problem. His bill seeks to ensure that gas tax revenue is shared with townships for roads and bridges instead of designing it solely for public transportation systems.

Now, if we're talking about the need for a long-term infrastructure plan, we should also mention the need of municipalities to have stable, predictable funding. This is a way to get more funding for the Chatham-Kent municipality to build and maintain the things that we need today. Interestingly enough, this afternoon, I was at the ROMA-Good Roads, down at the Royal York, meeting with administration folk and councillors from the municipality of Chatham-Kent. Even though we were discussing a different issue regarding the Ministry of Natural Resources, we did, in fact, have a sidebar discussion regarding infrastructure and the problems that are being faced within the municipality of Chatham-Kent today.

Back home, the folks at the municipality of Chatham-Kent made the effort to take stock of their infrastructure, and they realized that the area is in a state of disrepair. As alarming as it is to know that you have a \$19-million infrastructure deficit, it's much more concerning to be unaware of this deficit. It was sobering news, and the municipality is now doing its best to handle that problem.

This points also to the critical importance of knowing the existing infrastructure inventory and its state of repair or disrepair here in the province of Ontario. This is something that was stated by the minister and our critic, and it's the kind of thinking that we don't often see in this Legislature.

Specifically, the bill states, "Each long-term infrastructure plan shall include the following information:

"1. A description of the state, as of the date or during the period specified in the plan, of the infrastructure wholly or partly owned by the government, including,

"(i) an inventory of the infrastructure,

"(ii) a valuation of the infrastructure,

"(iii) the age of infrastructure assets, and

"(iv) the condition of infrastructure assets."

Let me just summarize very quickly. It looks at the inventory, the valuation, the age and the condition of all the infrastructure assets. By looking at infrastructure with

a focus based in reality, we set aside partisan gains and ensure that Ontarians will receive the services that they need and deserve.

Unfortunately, we have seen plenty of partisanship when it comes to infrastructure in Ontario. In recent weeks, the minister has, in fact, taken it upon himself to attack the federal government on television and on Twitter in an attempt to pre-emptively shift any blame away from the provincial government. You have to wonder what happened to the Premier's promise to govern with civility. Perhaps this promise doesn't extend to her ministers.

Madam Speaker, while the minister frequently states that Ontario is, in fact, investing in infrastructure, spending alone is a very poor metric of results. Tangible results are what matters, not how many dollars have been spent on a given project. If the amount of money spent on a project is all that matters to the minister, then eHealth, Ornge and the gas plant scandals would be resounding successes. Billions of dollars were spent on these initiatives. Do we have a world-leading electronic health registry that Ontarians can be proud of? No. Do we have a provincial air ambulance service that we can count on when we need it most? No. Are Ontario families receiving a break on their home hydro bills after this government spent billions of taxpayer dollars on cancelled plants in Oakville and Mississauga? My guess is no. This is what happens when you lack a long-term plan and simply throw money at problems.

What we've been seeing during the Liberals' reign in office is a series of knee-jerk reactions, time and time again, in an attempt to hold on to power. We've seen it each time the Liberal Party is in danger of losing a seat. This has been painfully obvious with the large number of by-elections that we've gone through since the 2011 general election.

Niagara Falls was a riding that was completely ignored by the governing Liberals. Kim Craiton, the former member for Niagara Falls, often fought his own government, trying to get funding for projects in his riding. Sadly, he was ignored, and it took a by-election to—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): A point of order.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: It's not clear to me how what the member is speaking about is in any way related to the bill that we are discussing. My understanding is that under the standing orders, it's required that we speak to the bill. It's not clear to me at all that the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex has spoken to the bill at all so far. I would ask that you ask him to stick to the topic at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Laurie Scott): I thank the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville for her comments, and I ask the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex to please—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Interjection: Infrastructure—just say it.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Apparently, the infrastructure—infrastructure with an R.

Niagara Falls was a riding—
Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: How many Rs are in Oakville?

Niagara Falls was, in fact, a riding that was completely ignored by the governing Liberals. Kim Craiton, the former member from Niagara Falls, often fought his own government, trying to get funding for infrastructure projects in his riding. Sadly, he was ignored, and it took a by-election to force the Liberals to think about these projects. Suddenly, funding the hospital is a priority, and there's money for the racetrack after all, so they say. But while it makes for good campaign literature, this kind of approach the government has been employing for the last decade does not make for effective infrastructure management.

But back to the bill.

1650

Mr. Bill Mauro: That would be nice.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you. In section 6, Bill 141 calls on the government to use a specified set of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets. This bill does not mention throwing everything out the window if there's ever a by-election in a riding that is vulnerable to the government.

Session after session, year after year, many Liberal ministers have, in fact, stood up in this Legislature and boldly stated that it is now time for long-term plans. The party opposite has been in power for over a decade now. Why is it that they're still only proposing coming up with a long-term plan? They've had over 10 years, Madam Speaker, to get it done. But at the end of the day, what do we have to show for it? Well, here we are with a piece of legislation that tells us something that every party in this House agrees with: Infrastructure planning is important, and we should develop a 10-year plan. We all agree to that.

After all that time in office, the Liberal government puts forward a bill that asks Ontarians to wait three more years to put together a plan. How many years does it take for the Liberal government to put a plan together? That's not a riddle. But I'll tell you something: The answer is always a couple of years more.

My riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex doesn't have a few more years to wait, Madam Speaker. We have lost over 1,000 jobs in my riding in the last few months alone, and infrastructure is crumbling just like a cookie. Immediate action is needed. What we need is a government that will make tough decisions and establish a plan as soon as possible, instead of perpetually kicking the can further down the road.

So let me say again that I support the initiatives that are present in this bill. While we may disagree on exactly how we should go about paying for it, every member in this Legislature understands and values the importance of infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, tough decisions are being forced on municipalities as they desperately look for ways to address serious infrastructure needs with limited funds. In tough times, prioritization based on severity must be made, something this government has failed to address with any real moxie.

On paper, this bill says all the right things. But if you look into the context of when this bill is being brought forward, over 10 years after the Liberals formed government, Ontarians sit there scratching their heads and wondering just how much more time they need to develop a plan. Perhaps I should take you back to the riddle again: How many years does it take a Liberal to develop a plan?

Mr. Todd Smith: How many?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: They always say just two more. Just two more.

We've all seen what happens when you do not develop and stick to a long-term plan. The record of this Liberal government demonstrates just what can go wrong when you don't manage and plan properly. Hard-earned tax dollars are spent with little to no oversight and even less results. So for the sake of Ontarians, I hope that Bill 141 demonstrates a change in the way this province is governed. We simply cannot continue to go down the same path over and over and over again.

One more thing I might add, again: How many years does it take the Liberals to develop a plan? They'll tell us just two more.

Mr. Todd Smith: Just a few more.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Just a few more.

Madam Speaker, I know that my time is not up, but for the sake of expediency, I want to thank the members for listening attentively, and I hope that—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Do you just want a few minutes? Just a few more minutes?

Mr. Todd Smith: Have you got any more riddles?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, but I will tell you about the land of milk and honey. Did you know that, with this Liberal government, that milk turned sour, and the honey turned hard?

Madam Speaker, without any further ado, I want to thank you again for the opportunity of addressing this wonderful Legislature and, again, addressing Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

I find it a little bit interesting. They do talk about a number of different things in here, like long-term planning and how important that is. They also talk about having guiding principles. Well now, that is really something that we need to take a look at. But you know what? What would that include? Well, perhaps demographic and economic trends, and fiscal plans, no less, or how about advancing the use of new technologies and practices, and supporting innovation partnerships between government and industry? Now that's innovative.

Or how about protecting the environment and considering the impact of severe weather on infrastructure?

We do know for a fact, Madam Speaker, that this past winter has been an extremely harsh winter. All you have to do is drive around Toronto, or perhaps even in your own ridings, and take a look at the number of potholes that have been created and whatnot.

That's going to mean more paving of streets. You've got broken water mains. You have all kinds of issues and flooding, even in the Chatham-Kent-Essex riding. We have a beautiful provincial park called Rondeau Provincial Park, and that particular park was hard hit because the buildup of the ice caused movement that basically destroyed the beautiful dock there, which is probably going to cost around \$1 million to repair, which is really, really unfortunate.

I also talked about project prioritization. I think that that's obviously extremely critical, especially when municipalities have limited funds, and they're looking at, "What do we do? We're not getting the help that we need from this provincial government."

Having said that, I think that we need to look at such things as the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. What about transportation plans under the Metrolinx Act? Or how about the Lake Simcoe Protection Act and municipal water sustainability plans under the Water Opportunities Act?

I think that there are also other elements that need to be considered when prioritizing plans, which would include project proposals that would, in fact, demonstrate a full consideration of all related capital and life-cycle costs and a long-term return on investment; we call that ROI. Or how about maximized tax base growth and, lastly, stimulated productivity and economic competitiveness? One of the other areas that we need to look at is also promoting design excellence in public works. Of course, we talked earlier about skills training and apprenticeship.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank you again for the opportunity of presenting my thoughts and findings to this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I listened to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex when he started speaking, and I was wondering how long it would take the Liberals to stand up and make a point of order so that he would actually speak to the content of the bill, because we were listening here, my colleagues and I. We were commenting, as well: "What's going on? He's not talking to the bill." So kudos to you for standing up and recognizing that 10 minutes into the 20-minute speech; that's great.

The last item that the member had touched on was the apprenticeship training piece in this bill, where the government does require that there are apprentices used in the construction of a building in this act here. It's going to speak a little bit to the fact that we need to keep our apprentices engaged and working so that they can continue their education and develop their skills in order to get certification.

It also speaks to the College of Trades. Now, this government kind of did a dismal job on promoting and

educating the public and making people aware of the College of Trades. Those who are affected by the College of Trades—we heard a lot of complaints. They didn't know what the College of Trades does, the structure—they weren't aware of that. They weren't aware of the fee.

1700

I'm hoping that this bill is going to promote apprentices working in the field; and then, of course, we're going to have the College of Trades, which is going to help with the apprenticeship issues. There have been some reviews on that. But I like the piece where there's an apprenticeship requirement, because we have to do more in order to make sure we promote that labour force. The College of Trades is there, and their purpose should be to promote trades and get the word out to make sure we get those apprenticeships certified.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex for his comments on Bill 141.

Speaker, this really is an important piece of legislation. Long-term infrastructure planning can never be overstated in terms of its importance. I know that the ROMA-OGRA conference is under way this week here in Toronto—I was down there this morning on behalf of our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As is their wont and their like—and I used to be a municipal councillor; we all did it: We come down here looking for more. There's nothing wrong with that. But to suggest that perhaps they have not already been doing very well when it comes to infrastructure funding over the course of the last 10, going on 11, years under our Liberal government I would say is a bit disingenuous.

In my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, through our investments in infrastructure, I could give you example after example of significant infrastructure projects that we've managed to move forward. In fact, in the first eight years or so, we spent approximately \$60 billion on infrastructure, and we've committed a further \$35 billion. When we were elected in 2003, we identified infrastructure spending as one of three deficits that existed in the province of Ontario at the time of our election. Money was not being spent on infrastructure in this province, in a variety of sectors—not just sewer and water, but sewage treatment plants, mass transit, and on and on it went. It was a very significant deficit.

We have now, as you may or may not know, created a permanent \$100-million infrastructure fund for small, northern and rural municipalities that is going to provide them with the certainty of money flowing on a regular basis. In my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Neebing, Conmee, O'Connor, Gillies and Oliver Paipoonge have all benefited from our infrastructure investments over the course of the last 10 years. This fund will provide them with a guarantee on a go-forward basis that they will be receiving at least some money on an annual basis to help them with their infrastructure needs. We know they are great. We know the small municipalities have large

geographic areas to cover and small tax bases. That fund is one in a long line of things that we've done to help them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the debate that the Chatham–Kent–Essex member raised. I was very pleased that in his debate he talked about the ice storm and the infrastructure challenges that our municipal partners are now faced with.

In Dufferin–Caledon, we were hit pretty aggressively during the ice storm over the Christmas break. I remember it well because there were many, many families who were out for eight—some as long as 10—days. You can imagine the frustration when they called Hydro One and the response back was, “You’ll be back up tomorrow at 11.” What happened is that the families within my communities said, “I can deal with one more day,” and of course, it stretched out, in some cases, to eight and 10 days.

Those were the individual challenges that happened as a result of the ice storm. The municipal challenges we're all very well aware of. There was so much damage, particularly in Caledon, with downed trees. The clearing and the infrastructure challenges that are going to occur and will continue to occur for months are still there, and they're still dealing with them. It's unfortunate that they are still waiting for some kind of feedback, some kind of response from the government as to what, if any, assistance will be offered. So I was pleased that my caucus colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex was able to raise that in the debate about Bill 143. I hope that we are able to offer some assistance and feedback to our municipal partners soon, because it has been too long in coming.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to stand and comment on the remarks from the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex. One of the things he touched on in his remarks concerns apprentices. This is something that was also mentioned by my colleague the member for London–Fanshawe when she was giving her input on his remarks.

Certainly, in our community, opportunities for apprentices to gain experience in the variety of trades that they need to become certified is critical, and it's especially critical for young people who are trying to make their way in the world and become a skilled tradesperson. We need to be able to provide more opportunities for these young people in our communities to gain employment, gain experience and to make a living for themselves and for their families. For that reason, I appreciate the provision of the legislation, Bill 141, that requires certain numbers of apprentices to be employed in the construction or maintenance of infrastructure projects.

I'm a little bit concerned about the lack of definition around what that means. How many apprentices can we expect to see employed, and how will that be enforced?

How will we be able to ensure that the government makes good on that commitment to employ apprentices?

Thank you very much for this opportunity to comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, from Dufferin–Caledon, as well as the member from London West for their comments, their insightfulness and their concerns with regard to Bill 141.

Speaker, one of the members did talk specifically about skills training and apprenticeships, but they did fall short of saying that perhaps those ratios should be one-to-one, something that we fully support and feel that the ratio should be that way so that, again, it's not a punishment with regard to small businesses.

Again, I know one of their arguments might be, “Well, the ratios need to be 3 to 1 or 4 to 1 for safety reasons.” Well, we're not falling short on safety as well. That is also very paramount with each one of us in the PC caucus as well.

I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. He referenced sewer and water treatment and other infrastructure projects, but he also mentioned a \$100-million infrastructure project that has been undertaken up in—if I understood him correctly—rural northern Ontario, in his riding, and he went at great lengths and talked about that.

But then I thought afterwards, “Well, that's kind of interesting that all of that money, or a good portion of that money, is in fact going back into a partisan riding.” That money needs to be spread around, Speaker, not just in northern Ontario, but also throughout the rest of Ontario as well.

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: That is, if I understood him correctly.

Also, the other thing that we had talked about was the importance of having infrastructure available, especially when we're hard hit by such things as the ice storm that the member from Dufferin–Caledon had spoken about as well.

So I think it's very important that we take a look at all aspects, and I look forward to moving this into committee, where amendments will be forthcoming.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Essex.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence.

Thank you to my colleagues who are in the House who are paying considerable attention to this bill that has been proposed by the government. I have enjoyed listening to my colleagues add their thoughts and insight to the debate. I think it's a worthwhile discussion to have, considering that many of us visited the Ontario Good Roads Association and the Rural Ontario Municipal—the ROMA—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Rural Ontario Municipal Association.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Rural Ontario Municipal Association. Thank you to my good friend, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, who is a former municipal representative in the city of Windsor and is well versed on the needs of our municipalities when it comes to infrastructure.

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Madam Speaker, I can tell you that the entire discussion around infrastructure, particularly our needs in rural areas, is one that is near and dear to my heart. I come from the construction sector, the heavy sector. Specifically I spent, on and off, about 10 years working on the roads, mainly on the 401—a fulfilling career, one that taught me some valuable skills in terms of construction, taught me the ethics of hard work, the nature of construction and the gruelling demands that it puts on labourers, specifically; and also, the fact that our province's contractors do a pretty bang-up job and are proud of the products that they produce each and every day in the province. I, in turn, was proud to be a part of building our infrastructure hands-on. When I go under the overpasses on my way from Essex to Toronto, I see various projects that I worked on, and it fills me with a sense of accomplishment knowing that those dollars were spent building good, tangible products in our province. It also afforded me, as a young worker, a really good wage to be able to pay off my university education and buy my first home. The benefits and wages that were afforded to me as a union labourer were certainly far beyond what you would find in your normal, average, everyday home construction or basic construction sector. I guess that's the nature of heavy construction: Those skills are a little bit more enhanced and require, I guess, a higher level of knowledge. So I was proud to learn that and to be a part of that sector.

We all know, in this House, the importance of constant, continued oversight of our province's infrastructure needs. In fact, when we went through the 2008 recession—one caused, I would argue, by deregulation, privatization and globalization in the United States in the financial sector, not by any situation here in our jurisdiction in the province of Ontario, but solely on a system that was meant to bankrupt the middle class—I would say that we relied on investments in infrastructure to stimulate the economy as a primary driver. We all recognized it. You saw massive amounts of stimulus money go to various states and provinces to spur economic development and growth through infrastructure. Why is that? It's because we know as a province that when we spend a dollar on infrastructure, we get several other dollars in return. There's a multiplier effect. There's a triple net benefit. There are spinoff jobs. I think I've heard that a job in infrastructure spurs seven other jobs in those local communities. So we know that, at the end of the day, it's good value for money. It's Keynesian in its implementation and its thought because it actually works when you invest in your nation's infrastructure, in

those vital links that bring us all together, whether it be rail or road transportation or air—or even our knowledge infrastructure, being high-speed Internet and the kind of activity there that's required.

So we all know the importance. The concerns that I think are being raised or born of this bill are because this province has gone so far off track—no pun intended, Madam Speaker. The fact is that we used to do infrastructure in a certain way that understood the principles of that value-added component to issuing tenders, identifying local suppliers, prioritizing the needs of jurisdictions. Since that time, we have relied on what is the new baby, darling, of infrastructure procurement policy: the P3s, the public-private partnerships. It infuses an aspect of global tendering, I guess I would say, and an outsourcing of our province's infrastructure needs to multinational conglomerates that really don't have any skin in the game. We're seeing that as evidenced with the Herb Gray Parkway. My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh so eloquently explained to members some of the fundamental failures in that project that we're already seeing, and it's not even completed yet. Thankfully, we have the diligent oversight of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to catch those issues, to work with those who are providing the oversight in the MTO and to bring them to the light of the government to hopefully act on them.

We have seen that, but what if we didn't have that mechanism? At the very least, we would see corners being cut, we would see massive pressures on our smaller contractors and we would see a degradation of training standards and health and safety standards. These are things that are of concern to those in municipalities who want to see the value-added aspects of infrastructure projects but understand that we need to set the standard ourselves here in this province.

P3s eliminate that vital component, that component that returns that investment, that recycles that investment, that says that we identify a project, we identify a local contractor, we support that through an open bidding process, a transparent process, and ultimately we all benefit. Our communities benefit with enhanced infrastructure and our businesses benefit with conductivity and ease of transportation of their goods and services. Then productivity goes up and things get better.

What happens is that the multinationals that have really brokered many of these deals, not only in this province but across Canada and certainly across developed countries and in some national jurisdictions around the world, are removing, first of all, the aspect of profit. They will take it back to their home jurisdiction, and it doesn't get reused. It doesn't get applied in other areas of the province or in the jurisdiction where the infrastructure project is. That's an important component. That, in and of itself, makes these projects more expensive.

When we're talking to our constituents and speaking with them about the need to have multi-billion-dollar long-term frameworks for infrastructure spending and we're telling them that we need to spend billions of

dollars, I know that many of our friends in our communities—their eyes glaze over. How could we speak of these enormous types of costs? But when we tell them that the company that's going to come in could potentially not hire anyone in this jurisdiction, not hire any local contractors and the local workers' work isn't even guaranteed, then people start to have to question.

So I think this bill, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, is born out of those concerns about the shift of this province from traditional methods of procurement to the P3 model of infrastructure. There are many points of evidence that you can see—many indications of where P3s have failed drastically and actually haven't shifted the burden of responsibility onto the proponent, as it is stated to be, but have actually had the province retain that—I'm losing my train of thought, Speaker—"responsibility" is the word I was looking for.

The responsibility ultimately, we know, lies on the province, and we're seeing that—back to the example of the Herb Gray Parkway, where local contractors, and we met with several of them a couple of weeks ago, are feeling as though the public dollars that are being used for the Herb Gray Parkway are in fact putting them out of business, because those public dollars, in essence, triggered the group that built the girders and has now backed away from any of its fiduciary responsibilities to those companies, or contractual responsibilities. There are no provisions within the P3 model to call them to question on that or to take that money back and force them to actually own up to their responsibilities. That's a massive failure that the minister has yet to acknowledge, has yet to take action on—despite his overtures of actually wanting to do that, he has not done anything. I think that abdication of responsibility is built into the P3 model.

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So you've got a province that has outsourced its procurement and management of vital infrastructure needs all across the province—yet it's interesting that we see a central focus on the infrastructure needs of the GTA, as if they give personal attention and care to the needs of the greater Toronto area. That leaves quite a bad taste in the mouths of the municipalities in areas that are outside of the GTA, like Windsor, like Niagara Falls, like anywhere else in the province. They feel as though we have a government that is the government of Toronto. We need a government of Ontario that is looking after the needs of the entire province when it comes to infrastructure and not outsourcing it to the P3 model.

It is your responsibility to provide the oversight, and yes, it may mean that you might need to hire new Ministry of Transportation officials or enhance the ability for Infrastructure Ontario to provide that oversight. It might mean that you have to do some more work.

Whoever is in the bureaucracy there and whoever is selling this government on the need to go full bore on the P3 model is selling you a bill of goods that I don't think will provide the value that you think it will—and it certainly hasn't. We haven't seen the track record of it.

My friend from Windsor—Tecumseh talked about bundling. That's another aspect of P3s, where it ultimately cuts out the ability of any local contractor to bid on projects that would be within their scope, and because of the bundling of the projects, requires the proponent to provide the financing of it, too. It certainly cuts out any community-based contractors, because they just don't have the hundreds of millions of dollars in available financing. They can't acquire that from their local credit union or their bank. They're just not that big. So they get shut out of that work that they'll have to drive past on the 401, whether it be a service centre or an OPP centre in their hometown, when they are fully capable of doing that.

Does it add value? Again, I submit and I argue that you take out that component of a renewable sort of resource. That's how it should be looked at, as far as I'm concerned, because when you know your local contractors are doing well, then you know that you have a healthy economic base and you know that your infrastructure needs are being met.

Speaker, there are other considerations that come into play when we're talking about our provincial infrastructure needs, ones that I don't think this bill necessarily addresses. I'm not even sure if this bill necessarily addresses too much in the way of actual, specific regulatory changes. It seems like a broad-scope type of initial conversation to start to bring parties in—and I guess that's a welcome piece of legislation that, as I'm hearing, we'll all endorse. But I want to tell you that when it comes to infrastructure in the province and our desire to see local contractors and local workers provide and build that infrastructure and be proud of it and reap the benefits of government procurement—there's the comprehensive economic trading agreement. It's called CETA. It has been called the Canada-European trading agreement; actually, it's not. It's the comprehensive economic trading agreement with the European Union, which supposedly, purportedly, cuts out the ability of municipalities to even require local content. So this is being brokered, we think—because we don't know what the terms of the CETA agreement are. We think that they are selling off the ability of municipalities to hire, should they choose, a local contractor.

I'm sorry to bring the realm of free trade and globalization into the debate, but it is directly tied to infrastructure procurement. I wish it wasn't the fact. I wish it wasn't a part of it because it doesn't make economic sense, when, again—back to the point that there is a benefit to identifying and maintaining local product, local procurement and local content, because that money recycles. We've seen time and time again where this government has failed in its ability to value that component. We've seen them launch into private contracts, abdicate, again, their responsibility to provide the oversight and just leave it to the free market and private industry to manage, maintain and fulfill when, in fact, many times those deals go sour.

Again, that responsibility and risk gets put right back onto the taxpayer. As evidence, we have the Oakville and

Mississauga gas plants; as evidence, we have Ornge air ambulance—again, although non-profit-based, this was an abdication of responsibility to a private operator, who then spun it off into private enterprises. I would say that eHealth is another aspect of a P3.

So we have a common denominator here in terms of the failures of government procurement when we're either building or providing services. Why not have the guts, why not have the fortitude to actually do it ourselves? Governments should be able to be proud of their ability to provide good services and good value for money to their constituents.

I guess we've seen that that message still hasn't gotten through, or maybe it has. Maybe this is the beginning of that conversation. I hope that it is. I certainly look forward to inviting my good friends who are subcontractors on the Herb Gray Parkway to come and testify, should this bill actually reach committee, and to talk about their experiences under P3s and their experiences being shut out of projects that have been bundled, because it hasn't been good.

In fact, if you look at the article that was in the Windsor Star about my friend Charlie Hotham, who owns Hotham Building Supplies, they asked him what he thought overall of the P3 model in terms of construction, and he said that it isn't good, it doesn't work, and it's certainly not working for those subcontractors in Windsor. It's not working for the various municipalities that want to support their small local contractors.

But I think that this bill could be the impetus to us having a broader discussion. I'm hopeful that the minister actually is sincere in his desire to fix the issues that have been brought about by various construction associations when it comes to the bundling, because they are the ones who are dealing with these 800-page contracts, they are the ones who are dealing with holdbacks on their work that seem to carry no reason whatsoever, and they are the ones who are ultimately saying that this is just not a model that works for the future of the province. Of course, they want to be partners in infrastructure and in our infrastructure planning.

I do see that there are some thresholds that the government is considering: that the province would give priority to infrastructure projects that align with provincial plans. I think that that's a good step, of course, but that's identifying that there is a plan. We should go ahead and do it, but through which method: Through a method that has a proven track record of failure, cost overruns and, again, eliminates that net benefit, or through what we know has worked, a historic type of plan that continues to understand the underlying values of provincial procurement and supporting our domestic content?

Madam Speaker, I thank you very much. I can't believe the time is gone already. I welcome comments from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on this very important bill

dealing with infrastructure and what it really means for jobs and prosperity in all our respective communities.

I want to thank the member from Essex for talking about it. I think that at some point he was trying to make a reference that there somehow has not been that much investment in infrastructure outside the greater Toronto area. I just want to bring my perspective from Ottawa and tell him that he's not correct in that assertion, because if you look at the investments that our government has made in infrastructure, just in Ottawa alone, it's incredible.

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Right now we're building a state-of-the-art light rail system in Ottawa; most of it, actually, is getting built in my community of Ottawa Centre with a tunnel going through downtown, so we'll have our first subway being built. The provincial government is investing \$600 million in that project. The federal government is putting in the same amount of money. So we are a one-third partner in that incredible project.

Also, we were the first to the table, investing about \$33 million for the Ottawa River action plan to stop the flow of raw sewage from our city into the Ottawa River. Again, that investment has resulted in the raw sewage in the Ottawa River declining by 40%, and we're working hard towards the second phase of that project.

Then, not to mention, occurring at every single university and college and hospital in Ottawa—those great public institutions have doubled in size over the last 10 years, making sure that citizens of Ottawa continue to get the best public service possible. We are continuing with those investments because we know that they not only create jobs but ensure that the residents of Ottawa get good education and good health care.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member from London Essex. No, Middlesex—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Elgin—Middlesex—London. Thanks very much, Speaker. I'd have to say that the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is the only Speaker in the House that gets my riding right, so don't feel bad. But I applaud the Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Alas, poor Yurek! I knew him well.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Poor Yurek; you're not kidding.

I just want to make a few comments regarding this debate that's going on that the member from Essex has brought up. He brought a good point forward—worried about being able to get local companies to get local jobs in our infrastructure projects. I'd like to expand that further: opening up the tendering for all government work, whether they are union or non-unionized companies, to have everyone have fair competition on jobs.

We had a courthouse being rebuilt in our riding, and, unfortunately, there were numerous companies in my riding that weren't allowed to bid on the project because they're not unionized. I thought, "That's a shame," because maybe they could have brought in a little competition and a lower price. A union company may have still

got the price at the end of the day; however, there wasn't the competition allowed for that job. I was quite disappointed on that fact.

The other point you bring up about planning and infrastructure: I'd hope you'd agree with us that the government should expand the provincial gas tax program to include all municipalities, especially rural Ontario, who may not be able to afford or need a transit system but do need that money to build their roads and bridges. Unfortunately, the government is shutting them out of a share of the gas tax.

Everybody in this province pays the gas tax when they fill up their car or truck or what have you. However, this government inhibits that money coming back to the ridings of people who would desperately need the gas tax funding, considering this government has been cutting the OMPF funding for many years now. There's no predictable funding model for infrastructure for our rural municipalities. I hope you take our advice and maybe expand the provincial gas tax and support us in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I stepped out shortly, so I'm back, and I've listened to many members debate the bill.

I touched earlier on the fact that apprenticeship is one of the areas that this bill addresses and that we should be using more apprentices when there's construction infrastructure. I hope that this bill is going to be able to get through debate in the House and go to committee, because it's long overdue that we have a direction and a plan for infrastructure. We've heard from several municipalities how their infrastructure is crumbling. Even the universities and colleges that I've visited sites on—they're about 50 years old, most of them, and their infrastructure is crumbling. Yet they're getting funding for new buildings, which is wonderful, but we need to make sure that we're looking after the infrastructure that we put in place if we're going to utilize that and not just let it sit there and deteriorate and crumble away.

Speaker, I do want to say that, back in 2009, when the College of Trades act was enacted, it took about—it just came into fruition, I think, in April 2013, so that was four years. I'm assuming the government did a lot of planning on that College of Trades act, but unfortunately, it didn't roll out that way. There was mass confusion. People were being pitted against each other. There's a lot of support for it; I've heard much support. I've also heard very much criticism from the Conservatives.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We're criticizing it.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, there we go. They're acknowledging that yes, they do. But overall, I think the concept of the College of Trades is a positive thing. We need to get employers engaged more in order to connect it—that's a little bit of a hint. I've read some research recently on how we need to make sure that employers are educated on the great programs and grants that are available to help apprentices to be hired in their field.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Madam.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Madam Speaker—yes, we don't want to make that mistake. It's a habit. We have more men in that chair than women, so we have to get more—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Let's change that.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: We should change that. Yes, I agree. Do we have unanimous consent to change that?

In any case, I'm pleased to add my voice to Bill 141. What I like about this bill is that it sets up a long-term view and it wants to create a framework for long-term planning. Why is that important? We know that infrastructure creates jobs, and if we can have this long-term view instead of a short-term view, I think everyone would benefit: Ontarians as residents of our province, but also the jobs that we want to create, especially now in this time of economic uncertainty that we're just exiting.

One of the key components that I like in the bill is the one that focuses on skills training and apprenticeships. The member from Essex was referring before to community benefits agreements that are in place in public procurement in other countries, in other places, that are targeted to recruit and train local youth in public sector projects. That's something that many members even on this side of the House have been advocating for. I have one example in my own riding. It's the Hammer Heads program. That's a skills and employment program that does great work within construction, really setting a career path for youth in underprivileged areas. I am a great advocate of that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member from Essex has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank my colleagues the Minister of Labour, the members for Elgin—Middlesex—London, London—Fanshawe and York South—Weston.

There's certainly room for this minority government to find consensus within the aspects of this bill. I think that when we're talking about apprenticeships—you know, it's interesting. I agree that we need to ensure that our apprenticeship regime is being utilized, and we're focusing on that, yet I think the bill calls for the minister to prescribe apprentices to be on these provincial infrastructure projects, whereas the College of Trades is purported to take the decision of apprenticeship ratios out of the hands of the minister. So there's a little bit of conflict there.

I like the fact that the decision around the ministry and apprentices is outside of the ministry and it's given to industry and to those who understand the needs of their labour demands.

There is some conflict there in my understanding of the implications of the bill, but there's no doubt that we need to be farsighted. We need to project well into the future in terms of our infrastructure needs and plan accordingly.

The minister speaks of cranes in the sky. That's almost like an old Russian proverb: Look at all the smokestacks and the smoke from our industry. Well, it doesn't necessarily mean that the system of all of that activity is actually a system that's built on a good foundation. If you've got cranes in the sky that are all under P3 models, then you're simply pushing that cost off well into the future for another generation to actually bear the burden of. It does eventually come up to catch you from behind there.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

1740

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I will use my 20 minutes and finish off the day here today.

I rise to speak to Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013. We have a bill here that the minister states will establish a mechanism to encourage "principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning for the province of Ontario." He indicated that underlying this legislation was the objective to support job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and to incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning.

Let me take a couple of moments to discuss those five various components of the bill.

With respect to number 1, long-term planning:

"The Minister of Infrastructure would be required to table a 10-year plan in the Legislature. The first plan is to be tabled within three years of the legislation coming into force and subsequent plans tabled every five years."

Number 2 is the guiding principles:

"The province and broader public sector organizations, such as universities, hospitals and municipalities, would consider key principles when determining infrastructure plans and investments, including the following:

—demographic and economic trends and fiscal plans;

—advancing the use of new technologies and practices and supporting innovative partnerships between government and industry;

—protecting the environment and considering the impacts of severe weather on infrastructure."

Number 3, project prioritization:

"The province would consider giving priority to infrastructure proposals that align with provincial plans." Here's where we might go off the rails a little, and I use that word quite literally. The examples that are in the document provided by the government on Bill 141 are transportation plans under the Metrolinx Act of 2006, the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, municipal water sustainability plans under the Water Opportunities Act of 2010 and other things. I think I saw a Golden Horseshoe plan in there somewhere.

But what I didn't see is what concerns me here. There is no mention whatsoever of the north, no mention of northern Ontario. In fact, there is a provincial plan. It's called the northern growth plan. Sadly, I believe I

understand why it is not included in this infrastructure, for many other reasons, one being that when that growth plan came out, if you could imagine the surprise—I was the mayor of the city of North Bay at the time and was presented with the northern growth plan. The Ontario Northland Transportation Commission was not mentioned anywhere in the document. That's the agency, that's the commission, that's the body that has been there for 100 years that handles all rail, bus, marine and telecom for northern Ontario, and other divisions as well. This was our passenger rail, this was our freight rail, all of the transportation needs. It's how we grew. It's how northern Ontario was built. To see that that northern growth plan did not include Ontario Northland and to see that the northern growth plan was not mentioned in this Bill 141 kind of leads us to wonder what the plans are for the north. Of course, we now know there are no plans. Strip the railway; have a fire sale of the assets. When I see that, I have to say this government has continued to say one thing and do exactly the opposite. So I am very disappointed that the north is not considered.

There is no mention of the Ring of Fire—again, one of the greatest opportunities not just for northern Ontario, but for many organizations here in southern Ontario as well. There are many engineering firms who were working in the Ring of Fire until the companies pulled out. There's no consideration in this infrastructure plan for northern Ontario, the Ring of Fire and Ontario Northland.

Other elements that would be considered when prioritizing plans include project proposals that demonstrate a full consideration of related capital and life cycle costs, a long-term return on investment, maximized tax base growth, and stimulated productivity and economic competitiveness.

Number 4 talks about promoting design excellence in public works. We're going to talk about that in a minute, but basically, it says, "Architects and other professionals with design expertise and experience would be involved in certain provincially owned and funded infrastructure projects. Regulations would be required before this provision would come into effect." When I finish number 5, I'm going to go back and talk about this particular mention.

Number 5 is skills training and apprenticeship: "The province would employ or engage apprentices in the construction or maintenance of certain provincial infrastructure projects. Regulations would be required before this would come into effect."

If the minister really wanted to make an impact on jobs through infrastructure, with that last point, when they talked about bringing the trades in, he would include what our party has been asking for since day one: a 1 to 1 journeyman-to-apprentice ratio. It's in our leader Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act, which will be voted on in two days. If you want a real jobs plan to bring jobs for apprentices, we hope that they'll adopt our plan, change the apprenticeship ratio to 1 to 1 and support Tim Hudak's million jobs plan.

Now, regardless, we support the principles, such as the need for long-term planning for infrastructure, that infrastructure investments should be prioritized based on a specific list of criteria, that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets and that government should publish, at minimum, a 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs, with a strategy to meet those. Those are all admirable goals that one would hope you would be following—that we should have been following for the last 10 years, as well.

However, the legislation fails to mandate any specific measures that would enable the practical implementation of those proposed principles. Again, they talk about them; it's a lot of talk and no action. They've had 10 years to perform some of these three-year, five-year and 10-year studies and forecasts.

I will mention one other issue with this bill that I referred to earlier, and that's specifically section 7.(1), as it contains what I would consider a very significant omission, and something very telling. I wish I understood and could get to the bottom of why this is here. I'll read you the section of Bill 141. It says:

"Requirements respecting architects, others

"7.(1) The government shall require the following persons to be involved in the preparation of a design for the construction of every infrastructure asset described in subsection (2), unless it is not practicable"—that's what it says—"in the circumstances:

"1. An architect as defined in section 1 of the Architects Act."

Now, Speaker, I appreciate that. As they said earlier—I think the comment earlier was good design and promoting design excellence in public works—admirable.

However, I'm very concerned that there is a specific role listed for architects, but it is silent on the role for professional engineers. After all, these are infrastructure jobs—infrastructure. I think that most people would presume that infrastructure jobs require the service of professional engineers. In fact, the Professional Engineers Act stipulates that any infrastructure project of 600 square metres or larger requires the services of a professional engineer.

This is a startling omission, quite frankly, on behalf of the minister with regard to Bill 141. They specifically talk about architects for infrastructure projects, but do not make mention of engineers. Now, either this Bill 141 is all about building bricks-and-mortar buildings that they can go to ribbon cuttings for—but it doesn't address engineers, which will be required to have sewer and water projects, various roads and bridge projects.

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They don't need architects for those. We don't need architectural design excellence for roads. We don't need them for sewer and water projects—perhaps not even for bridges—but I'll tell you what we do need, Speaker: engineers. There is no mention of engineers—a glaring omission. I hope it's only a typographical mistake, Speaker, but from what I've been led to understand, it's not. Architects were put in by design and engineers were

left out by design. I don't understand what the grand plan is if you're having infrastructure programs and you don't engage engineers.

When it comes to the important issue of infrastructure in this province, this is a policy that really should be beyond politics. When committing to an infrastructure project, assuming that it has been planned and prioritized properly, once the decision has been made to invest in that infrastructure project, it should be beyond political, and I hope that's what will happen.

I want to speak to one issue that the minister has raised in this bill, and that's the need for long-term planning for infrastructure. In his bill, the minister made reference to the importance of having an inventory of our infrastructure assets in the province. I agree. Again, as mayor, we worked hard, and we spent considerable dollars to locate every sewer line, every water line. We inventoried all of our buildings. You can't fix what you can't measure, so you need to know those things. In fact, the minister makes reference to the fact that infrastructure planning and investment should take into account, of course, applicable budgets or fiscal plans. But I want to talk about the issue of the inventory of our assets. We cannot make an intelligent decision and a responsible decision about which infrastructure projects should be prioritized if we don't know the existing infrastructure inventory and the state of repair or disrepair.

I'm a northern boy. Obviously, I like to talk about northern Ontario, and I am going to give you the perfect example of what I'm talking about. Again, I refer to Ontario Northland. We have a government who doesn't quite understand anything north of Steeles Avenue. They don't understand our valuable, 112-year-old Ontario Northland. It was painfully obvious when, in the budget of 2012 the finance minister said he would save \$265 million out of the budget by having a fire sale of Ontario Northland—when the documents that we obtained through the gas plant scandal hearings and subsequently called the Auditor General in based on those documents—the new Auditor General provided a report to this Legislature in December that indeed showed it would not save \$265 million but in fact cost over \$800 million to have this fire sale. That's a spread or, as we call it in business, a delta, of \$1 billion.

This is a government who talks about planning and understanding their infrastructure, Ontario Northland—rail, road, buses, marine, telecom, fibre; all kinds of infrastructure assets. They fail to understand the nature of one of their crown jewels. In fact, part of that \$1-billion mistake they were making is that they didn't even know of the six-year and 14-year severances that were on the books for these various employees. You would think that before you were making—I'll call the Ontario Northland fire sale an infrastructure decision. It was a decision to get rid of rail and freight and passenger lines and the marine division, telecom division and others. It was an infrastructure decision that they weren't even aware of, yet here we talk about making intelligent decisions on infrastructure projects.

This isn't the only infrastructure bungle that this government is guilty of, and I'm not sure if Bill 141 will address it or not because, as I said, in the colossal delays with respect to the Ring of Fire, I don't see any mention in the bill of the infrastructure. They make very specific references to things such as the Lake Simcoe Protection Act of 2008, Metrolinx—they're very specific in some of these—but there's certainly nothing about the Ring of Fire; there's certainly nothing about northern Ontario or Ontario Northland.

I can tell you, Speaker, again, it's this lack of understanding of the north. It's this lack of planning. They talk about infrastructure, but Speaker, I was in the Ring of Fire only two weeks ago for my fourth trip there, and I can tell you, this is an enormous opportunity that is awaiting decisions on infrastructure.

Cliffs resources had their plan. I visited the camp when they had 85 people. Two weeks ago when I visited the camp, it was six people. They're down to six people, and their job is to pack everything up and ship it home.

I also visited, in 2011, Noront resources camp. They had 125 people there. They had, on this last trip, again, only six people.

At least there's hope on the Noront site. What they want right now is infrastructure. They've got a proposal, what's called the east-west route, and it's to ship the nickel that they can pull out of the ground in a shaft—pull the nickel out, ship it to Pickle Lake by an existing winter road; build a winter road to Webequie and ship the nickel towards Pickle Lake by the existing winter road. It's an entirely feasible and plausible kick-start to the Ring of Fire. It's one of those easy wins we can do right now. We can put some scores on the board. But they can't get anywhere with this provincial government, which has dithered five years.

It's so sad to have seen so many hundreds of employees there and two weeks ago to see it dwindling down to only the dozen employees who were amongst these camps. It's very sad. Why it's sad is because two years ago, one of those companies spent over \$200 million on drill bits and drill rods. I have 12 manufacturers in my riding that make those drill bits and drill rods. Some \$200 million: It was unbelievable employment in our city only a couple of years ago. Last summer, I asked one of the companies, "How much are you spending drilling now?" and they said, "Zero." They went from \$200 million to zero. Why? He said, "Vic, why would I continue?"—and I don't blame him for this, by the way—"to spend my shareholders' money delineating our ore body when there's no infrastructure existing to get my ore to market?"

As a consequence from \$200 million to zero, we saw companies close in the city of North Bay. We saw Sandvik close, leave and move to New Brunswick—42 people unemployed there. We saw the other two major drilling manufacturing and drill rod companies have

massive layoffs. We have very high unemployment in the city of North Bay today, amongst the highest in the north. Certainly, as you go farther north, it is considerably worse.

But the problem is we're sitting, looking. I flew over the Ring of Fire before I landed and we looked at all of this opportunity. It's sitting; it's sitting almost on the surface of the ground there. Knowing that those riches can't be tapped because there's—you know, the expression, "You can't get there from here." Well, you can't get that product out of the ground. It's really sad to know that that is there. It's a golden opportunity—in this case, a nickel and a chromite opportunity—that we're missing in northern Ontario because this government has dithered on the infrastructure plan. They just can't seem to kick it over the goalpost when it comes to northern Ontario. We saw that in their fire sale of Ontario Northland. We saw that in the Ring of Fire. We saw that when they shut down 10 tourist information centres, and nine of them were in non-Liberal-held northern ridings.

They don't understand our infrastructure in the north. They said in the tourist information centres in the northwest, "Oh, don't worry; you can use your mobile apps to get all the tourism info." It's obvious they've never been north of Steeles Avenue, because there are many beautiful wilderness places that are not spoiled by telecommunications, so that you can't have a mobile app. There's no broadband; it's beautiful and unspoiled. They don't understand infrastructure. They certainly don't understand infrastructure in northern Ontario.

Speaker, the solution that they seem to come up with all the time is tax and spend. Here in Toronto, their solution for infrastructure is to add 10 cents a litre in gas. I read a member's statement only a couple of hours ago—three hours ago—that talked against that, with all of the members from the north fighting hard to avoid that type of tax-and-spend infrastructure investment.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: On a point of order: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence. I simply wanted to welcome a guest to the members' west gallery: my cousin Chad Guerin from Oakville, who has come for his first time ever to Queen's Park. I'm happy to have him this evening to see a little bit of the proceedings. So I just want to welcome him to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
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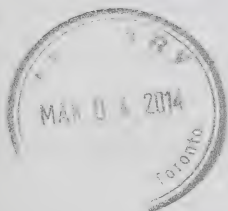
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Wednesday 26 February 2014

Mercredi 26 février 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 February 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLY ACT, 2014 LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2014

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014 / *Projet de loi 164, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2014.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: This is, actually, the final piece of three administrative, routine matters that have come before the House this week. The Supply Act, as it's called, is one of the cornerstones in this Legislature. Passing it will constitute the final authorization by this Legislature of the government's program spending for the fiscal year that's coming to a close. If passed, this bill would give the government the authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments. As I said, Mr. Speaker, it's an administrative and routine matter. I look forward to the debate and discussion, but it's something that's dealt with on a regular basis by the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to actually have the opportunity to debate this morning on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. The government House leader mentioned that this is the cornerstone and that it's an important debate for us to have. I couldn't agree more, Speaker.

I have been in this chamber for eight years now, getting elected on March 30, 2006, with Christine Elliott and Peter Tabuns, in a by-election. My first opportunity to debate in the assembly, my maiden speech, was about the budget. I learned very quickly thereafter that there are three major opportunities for legislators in this assembly to speak: It is on motions of supply, where you have the flexibility to talk about the issues in your community; it is the throne speech, where you're able to bring your constituents' concerns and their values to the floor of this assembly as we set the stage for the vision for the

province, and you actually have input into their views; and, of course, the budget. I find the budget is an excellent opportunity to talk about those combined and shared experiences that our constituents, our stakeholders, our families, our friends, face. We can bring those to the floor with the flexibility of telling their stories and trying to shape government policy.

I think that my party has made it very clear, particularly over the past two years but even more so in the last year, that we have a different approach for how we would take the province of Ontario. We have talked about creating a million jobs. We have talked about making life more affordable in Ontario by looking after energy rates that have become far too high in the province of Ontario. We have talked about eliminating red tape so that our small job creators, our small businesses are able to continue to thrive in a province that was built on prosperity but right now seems to be having some very basic and troubling challenges.

Speaker, I like to tell the story—and you're going to hear a lot from me, because I had this great opportunity this past January on behalf of Tim Hudak to visit almost 30 different ridings. I found that to be an actual dream come true. There's a lot of young pages here, and I look at them, and I was their age once before—I know you're probably doubting that, Speaker, that I was ever that young, but I was young once.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You still are.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I still am, says my good friend from Timmins—James Bay.

I arrived in this province, like many other people here, not from a different nation but from a different province. I always dreamed about going to Ontario. You know, I'd heard about Toronto, but I'd only ever seen it on television, and Ottawa was a place, because I was politically interested, that I had always wanted to visit. Who would ever know I would move to this province?

The point is, Speaker, when I was the young age of Abbey Jackson, who is our page from Barrie—when I was her age, Ontario was the beacon of Confederation. She was the strongest province. She was our economic engine, and she was so for a very basic reason. She had a strong economy that was fuelled by energy prices that were affordable. They were able to ensure that we had a branch-plant economy in this province, and that branch-plant economy made life here in Ontario not only affordable but gave people the opportunity and hope for a job. If they could get a job, that meant they could buy a house. If they could buy a house, they probably would buy a car. If they could buy a car, they started to think

about having a family of their own. Over the years, they would send their children to schools that they helped fund publicly. They would use hospitals that were built by people like Bill Davis. They then sent their children to universities and colleges in this province, and then they could retire here. That was the dream that myself and many others in this chamber who came from a different place—that was the dream, regardless of our political affiliation. That was the dream that brought us here.

I've now had an opportunity, as I stated at the very outset of my remarks—I had an opportunity not only to come here, to move here, to get a job, to have a home and buy a car, have a child, use some of those services, but I've also had the opportunity to stand in this assembly for almost a decade. Eight years I have spent in this assembly. The entire decade of my 30s, I have been right here. What I have noticed is a steady decline, Speaker, in Ontario's prowess as a leader in Confederation and a leader in North America and a leader in the world. I remember a time when people from all over the world, all over Canada, would come here. Today, those kids, those people with a dream, are going to Alberta. They might be going to Newfoundland. They could be going to Saskatchewan. But the problem is, they are not coming here. So those young kids that are about the age of our pages are now starting to think, where are they going to dream of getting their job or going to university? And unfortunately, because of the last decade, I don't think it's in Ontario.

And I think it's for one major reason. As I travelled the province these past two months, I started to talk to a lot of people, find out what their concerns were. The number one issue in Ontario today is high energy prices. From there stems our prosperity. From there stems job creation. From there stems people's affordability in their own province, where they live in their home, what they can afford to put into that home. The one thing that I think that we can offer in the Ontario PC Party is our affordable energy plan, and I say this because I spoke about this previously when I talked about the branch-plant economy. Why were job creators coming here to make investments in Ontario? They were coming here because our industrial policy was linked to our energy policy, and it was for over 100 years, until the last decade. When that veered off, when that track became off the track, when the former Minister of Energy, Mr. Duguid, became energy minister—when they became more about a social policy than an economic policy, we saw a rapid increase in the rates that people pay, a rapid increase on the bills that people pay. What are we hearing? We're hearing from job creators, we're hearing from seniors, we are hearing from families that they can't afford it anymore.

0910

I want to tell you a little bit about some of the places that I had an opportunity to visit. I want to tell you about some of the people whom I had the opportunity and the privilege to speak with. I want to tell you what their concerns were so that, as we move forward as a province, we can adequately address some of the challenges that

they are facing, because, as I've stated, the best way for us to become an economic leader in Confederation again, become the place where people from all across the world come, is by addressing our province's energy policies.

I had this wonderful opportunity to travel, and my first visit was to the beautiful city of London. I had the opportunity to work with our candidate there, Chris Robson, and to meet with a great deal of people in his community. In fact, he took me to a stable of people who were already badly beaten by this government. They were horse people. Not only were they threatened with their livelihood and their jobs because of this government's destructive policies on gaming, but they were also, on the other hand, dealing with high energy costs to heat their barns and to heat their homes. I really feel that they were in double trouble. They were facing some severe challenges because of government policy, not of which the least was energy policy.

After I left London, I went over to another riding with Jeff Yurek. Jeff Yurek is our London-Elgin-Middlesex MPP, a strong addition to the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus since he joined us. I went to visit with him, and we did a round table with energy stakeholders. Those energy stakeholders weren't next era. They weren't the big guys. They weren't the people that were being made whole by this government when they cancelled gas plants. These are the people that actually pay for that little black box of problems that they've created on the other side. These are the people that told me that Hydro One's billing problems were so severe and so bad that they were concerned that they weren't going to be able to keep their business in operation. They were young mothers who came around the table at Jeff Yurek's constituency office to tell me that they opposed this government's wind turbine policy and because of that were being sued by a big, bad wind company. That is who I met with in Jeff Yurek's riding.

Jeff also took me to Cole Munro food processing. Cole Munro food processing was incredible. It is a small fish-packing plant right in the heart of southwestern Ontario. It is a company whose profits went up 1% last year. You'd think that we would want to encourage that, but their hydro bill went up by 30%. That's unsustainable. But I congratulate my colleague Jeff Yurek for his attention to this and his desire to assist his constituents at Cole Munro.

I, from there, went to visit Kitchener after that. I had an excellent meeting with the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy. In fact, the meeting that was supposed to have gone on for 30 minutes lasted for two hours. We had some of the best experts in sustainable energy meeting with myself and our candidate there, Tracey Weiler, to discuss the important issues of the day. And when I came away, I was more convinced than ever that our concerns on the Green Energy Act were absolutely, 100% validated, when we met with those academics and when we met with those experts in the field. I think they would agree with me that this government policy of the Green Energy Act is actually catastrophic for the province.

From there, I had an opportunity to meet with the Kitchener chamber of commerce. Again, what were people talking about? The high cost of energy in the province. Tracey Weiler was standing there, in the proud tradition of Elizabeth Witmer, talking about these very important issues that she wants to bring to Queen's Park, and I admired that. I thought it was absolutely important and absolutely critical.

From there, I had the opportunity to move on and visit Oakville, and I was there with our candidate, Larry Scott. Larry and I met with the Oakville Chamber of Commerce. We had an opportunity to sit there around the table with the likes of Ford and Tim Hortons. We focused exclusively on energy. I gave them much of the same speech, and the discussion focused around a lot of the same issues I talked about earlier: coming from a different place to what the greatest place on earth is, and then finding a decade of decline, where there is no environment for major companies around the world to set up here when they can find cheaper and more sustainable power elsewhere. We've got to fix that problem, and I'm here on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus to tell you we will fix that problem.

I had an opportunity as well to spend some time during the by-election in Thornhill, where I was going door to door with our new MPP, Gila Martow. Gila has a great presence at the doorstep. She's feisty. I can tell you one thing, Speaker: We need more feisty women in the Ontario PC Party—because we only had seven of us and now we've got eight, but we're looking for a few more.

It was great to have Gila Martow out on the trail with us. When we were going door to door, the number one issue—whether we were in a factory or in a shopping centre, they were talking about the high cost of energy in Ontario. In fact, that's why Gila Martow was sent to Queen's Park with a higher percentage than her predecessor was: because of those key, invaluable issues.

From there, I had the opportunity to join my leader, Tim Hudak, on a day in Ottawa, but also, as we went from Toronto to Ottawa, we stopped in a few communities. We stopped in Cobourg with my friend Rob Milligan. He assembled one of the best round tables I've been to. He sat there with his business leaders, folks in the energy sector, people who were concerned about the economic prosperity of the people of Northumberland—Quinte West. I want to congratulate him.

What we heard when we were standing and we were sitting and we were discussing and we were talking and we were batting around ideas—what did we hear from the people of Northumberland—Quinte West, those job creators, those visionaries that were planning for the future? They told us the high cost of energy was driving away jobs from Northumberland—Quinte West. You don't have to take my word for it. You don't have to take Mr. Milligan's word for it. You don't have to take Tim Hudak's word for it. You just have to take the word of all those job creators that were there, that produced a report to say the high cost of energy is driving jobs away from Cobourg.

From there, we went with Scott Stewart to Peterborough. Tim Hudak and I had the opportunity to meet with the media. We had the opportunity to speak with the public. We had time to talk to our candidate, Scott Stewart, in Peterborough, about the high cost of energy in Ontario.

While we were in Peterborough, we talked about the Million Jobs Act. We talked about the situation this government has put us in by losing 330,000 manufacturing jobs. Peterborough has been hit like every other community. What do we need to get back on track? Tim Hudak has got a plan in the Million Jobs Act; we'll talk a lot more about that tomorrow. But I can tell you, we talked about the high cost of energy.

From there, I had the opportunity to drive up to Lindsay with our very good friend and outstanding colleague Laurie Scott. She's a great MPP. She has been representing this chamber since 2003. She left, as you'll recall, out of loyalty to the province and to the party, to allow our leader to run there. When he was not successful, Laurie Scott came roaring back to this assembly. She has been standing up for her constituents against wind turbine developments since she arrived back at Queen's Park. If you can believe it, Speaker, this Liberal government is attacking a Buddhist temple in her constituency.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And the airport in Peterborough.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: And the airport in Peterborough.

I had the opportunity to do a round table with job creators and seniors in Laurie Scott's riding. That is where this Hydro One billing issue really came bubbling up. People had not been given bills for months at a time, and finally, when they did receive a bill, it was for thousands of dollars. They were told, "Pay up now or disconnect." That's what we're telling seniors in Ontario under this Liberal government, and I think it's wrong. I think it's dead wrong, and we have to change that.

The day that I was most excited about on my tour was when I actually was able to get back to my own community of Nepean—Carleton. In Bells Corners, I met with Tim Hudak and Randall Denley, our Progressive Conservative candidate in Ottawa West—Nepean. We met with the Ottawa coalition of business improvement areas, and what they said to us was that the high energy rates are killing small businesses in eastern Ontario, specifically within the city of Ottawa. They wrote a letter to Premier Wynne. They hand-delivered it to the Minister of Energy, who has a few of these BIAs in his riding, and they've never yet received a response, so they were very upset. We met with the likes of Alex Lewis from the Bells Corners Business Improvement Area, Tom Moss from the Barrhaven Business Improvement Area. We met with them from the market. We met with them from Orléans. We had an opportunity to sit with some of the brightest visionaries on the local Ottawa economy, and they were telling us the number one cost of doing business for them is high hydro rates.

0920

They also did talk quite extensively about the minimum wage, so I have referred them to speak with their

local Minister of Labour, who will have some input into that. But that Ottawa coalition of BIAs, I think they're 18 to 22 strong, representing the whole city in terms of small business and large business—they have some very serious concerns about this community.

From there I had the opportunity to go to a number of winter carnivals. Obviously that's my favourite part of the job, is being out there. I can take my daughter. We bring our skates and, as a former hockey and ringette player, I like to get out on the ice every once in a while. I don't skate as fast as I used to, but I can tell you I've been getting a lot of practice this year, Speaker. It's really, really important because she's now at that age. I can tell you, this is what my favourite part of the job has been this winter. I will have three winter carnivals in a day. I have the largest geographic riding, and population-wise, in the city of Ottawa. What I'll do is I'll take my daughter and all of her friends. I load them up in my minivan and I'll go do the ribbon cutting or the chili competition, and the three or four kids in the minivan go off and they skate. They get their face painted. My daughter has been to more winter carnivals this year than I probably was from the age of 5 to 15. I always make a joke with her. I tell her that I'm grooming her to be my successor, so that she'll have a poll captain in every village in my riding, to which she says, "No, no, I don't want to do that." That's fine.

She's a great little girl and she has lots of great little friends. She's at school today in Nepean and she's enjoying—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Chip off the old block.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She is. She's not shy, that's for sure. She comes by it honestly with this Celtic heritage that I bring to this assembly.

You know what, I want to go back to this tour that I've taken because I had a great weekend in the riding. I saw several of my constituents. Their number one issue, not surprisingly, was hydro. They also wanted to see an election called. The folks in Nepean–Carleton are telling me that that's what they want. They've lost confidence in this government. They're expecting that the NDP will actually stop propping up this government. I think that's an important message for you to understand.

But the issue is that we continued on. I have a friend, Andrew Lister, who's running for the Ontario Progressive Conservatives in Orléans. I went there with our finance critic, Vic Fedeli. Vic spoke for a great deal of time on the implication of a gas tax for the city of Toronto and what that will do for us in Ottawa. He talked about the debt retirement charge that should have been paid off by this government and wasn't. We talked about energy prices. We had their BIAs. We had business owners. We had people from a wide spectrum. We had seniors that were there. They were tired of this government's policies. They have encouraged us to win that Ottawa–Orléans seat so we can send some common sense to Queen's Park from that area.

From there we drove off to Rockland, to the area of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the riding of Roxane

Villeneuve Robertson. I've spoken about her before. Her father is a former agriculture minister and francophone affairs minister. We went to Rockland to meet with their chamber of commerce. Vic Fedeli, our finance critic, gave a wonderful speech. He dissected the challenges Ontario is facing today. Again, not surprisingly, when we were in Rockland, the people of Rockland, the job creators in Rockland, told us their number one issue was energy. So that was, I think, really important.

The next day, I flew off to Toronto, because I have an office here, as we all do, in this assembly. I came to do some work and I worked with my leader, Tim Hudak. We toured a factory with Gila Martow, Kohl and Frisch, in Vaughan. As we walked through this wonderful factory—this a factory that supplies Walmart. They're a major player in Canada. Number one issue: energy. A major job creator in Toronto that's almost 100 years old, their major issue is hydro. From there, I met with a number of energy folks. I had a luncheon. I'm going through my calendar, Speaker. I don't have notes; I'm just going through my calendar to actually tell you what I did in the month of January. It's true. I can give you my calendar. It's not that exciting. There's not really any entertaining things in there other than work.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What did you have for breakfast?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Today? I had a nice cup of tea.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think the Liberals are heckling me, Speaker, to get a life. I'll tell you something: I will not stop working until this government is defeated, and that is why I'm reading into the record my calendar.

I gave two speeches that week, one in Toronto and one in Cambridge. I won't get into who was exactly there, but I can tell you there were energy executives, and I remember standing up and talking a little bit about Hydro One. I thought to myself—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: How much did they pay?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, I can say this. I stood up in Cambridge, and I stood up in Toronto, and I said this: "Enbridge can find me once a month. Why in the hell can't Hydro One find my constituents once a month? A private company can do that. Hydro One is fumbling all over the place."

I still maintain the CEO, Carmine Marcello, should be fired. He knew about the problems with Hydro One's billing as far back as 2010. He has been with the company for over 25 years. He does not have the confidence of the people of Ontario to fix that problem. It's time that he takes leave and puts somebody in place that actually knows what they're talking about.

That brings me to later that evening. I had an energy round table in Tim Hudak's area, and we were meeting with wind energy folks. When Tim Hudak stands here and he talks about the Green Energy Act, Tim Hudak knows what he's talking about. You want to know why? His community is actually being assaulted, like my community and Lisa Thompson's community, with wind turbine development that is not wanted, that we cannot

afford. So I met with Mothers Against Wind Turbines. They stood there and they told me about their real concerns. They told me about their high energy prices. They talked about the fear of their children moving away from Ontario, like the exact same fear my father had when I left Nova Scotia. That is Ontario today. That's in the Niagara region, Speaker. If the Liberals don't—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, there seem to be three ministers that are really projecting their voices this morning. I guess they want us all to hear their thoughts. But the Speaker doesn't want to hear their thoughts until it's their turn. So we'll keep it down, won't we, folks?

Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. You know what? This is a message I don't think the Liberals want to hear. That's why they're trying to speak over me. I'm only bringing to the floor the collective experience of the people who I met and the experience that I brought, and that brought me to this assembly. And I'm happy that my colleague is here from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, my seatmate. He has stood in this House on numerous occasions defending the people of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on the high hydro rates that are killing this province.

Speaker, I had that wonderful opportunity to do that during the month of January, and I think that the really important thing here and the message that I want to leave with you—well, I actually have 15 more minutes, so I'll find some more to talk about. But the message that is very strong with me—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not enough research last night. You should have stayed longer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh. The message that was very important to me in the month of January, and what I received loud and clear from all of those communities that I had gone to, was that people feel that there is a real energy crisis in the province of Ontario. So I think that is critical and that is key.

I then went on tour in the month of February as well. Tim Hudak kept me quite busy—a lot of kilometres on my car; my minivan looks quite beaten up. Of course, I had to drive down the 401. I lost a tire. I should actually show the picture to the Minister of Transportation, because I think we have a real problem with the winter road maintenance. I've never seen roads this bad in the province of Ontario in my life.

I then went down to have an energy round table with Jim McDonnell in the Cornwall area, and we met with a number of seniors that were there as well as the mayor, Bryan McGillis, of that local community. While we were there, it was very clear to me how bad this propane crisis is in Ontario and how bad the Hydro One crisis is in Ontario. I had one woman stand and tell me that her OAS does not cover her hydro, let alone her propane bill. What concerns me is that the poor little minister of whatever she is from Vanier—she doesn't quite understand that there are people out there who don't make as much

money as her, and there are people out there who are trying to—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: A point of order, Mr. Speaker?

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order: the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I never knew that "poor little minister from Vanier" was an appropriate form of address for the Minister of Community Safety. She's many things, but she isn't little in spirit, and Vanier isn't very poor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, we might want to be careful how we describe, with our adjectives, fellow members.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. I unreservedly apologize to the minister. I did not want to refer to her as poor.

The point is, we went down to the Long Sault, and we were standing there with some folks who had worked for Hydro One, telling us about the laissez-faire attitude in that community. Then, they also talked to us about the challenges they face living on a fixed income. With that fixed income that they live on—not unlike the people of Overbrook in Ottawa, they were wondering how they were going to pay their hydro bill on the limited income that they have. That was a real challenge, and one that this government does not have an answer for.

From there, I had the opportunity to meet with my own constituents. I had a full day of constituency meetings. I talked a lot about health care that day—on autism, we talked quite a bit; about cancer drugs that aren't being approved. A lot of my constituents, when they were coming in, they were scratching their head. They were saying, "They have enough money to cancel two gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga, but they don't have enough money to pay for my child's cancer drugs?" Or, "They don't have enough money for my child to get appropriate autism services?"

Mr. John Yakabuski: Priorities.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke speaks about priorities. There are no priorities in this government because there are too many priorities in this Liberal government, because Kathleen Wynne flails around whichever way the wind is blowing, trying to be everyone's friend. Well, I think it's time for leadership in Ontario. I think the person who can offer that is Tim Hudak. I think he's got the opportunity to do that, and I think that's consistent with what we've heard.

Let me tell you about the trip to Sarnia I took with Bob Bailey. What a wonderful day that we took with—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Great member.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He's a great member. He's been actually very vocal on the energy file. When I was in Sarnia and we met with the chamber of commerce there—they consider themselves to be the energy capital of Ontario, but they can't understand this government's preoccupation with the so-called advanced manufacturing, when they still think we have to invest in manufacturing

and make sure there's a climate ready for manufacturing in the province of Ontario that this government doesn't seem to want to deal with.

We had an opportunity to go to the UWO research park. We toured it with Tom Striffler, the director there.

We met with some constituents of Bob's. It was interesting when we were meeting with the constituents because what I had heard in Long Sault earlier in the week and what I had heard in St. Thomas earlier in that month was the exact same thing I heard in Sarnia—a senior citizen brings in his hydro bill and brings in his OAS cheque, and his OAS cheque is less than his hydro bill, courtesy of Kathleen Wynne and her Ontario Liberal government. Speaker, that's what I saw in Ontario during the months of January and February.

While I was out working, we didn't know where the Minister of Energy was; we didn't know where the Premier was—she was on a campaign stop boasting about her rented campaign bus. But those are the challenges.

In the time I have left in this 10 minutes, let me tell you how we will address these challenges that Ontarians are facing. Our leader, tomorrow, will talk about his Million Jobs Act, and I hope it has support from all of the parties in this assembly.

Let me tell you how we will address energy. Energy is a key component in the Million Jobs Acts. We actually do have a policy on energy and how we would make it more affordable for seniors, those on a fixed income, mums and dads, small business owners and manufacturers. We have said this: We will end, without a doubt, the FIT program. No more subsidies for wind and solar, making life more unaffordable for people in Ontario. We're going to change that. We're going to make sure that people pay for power at the appropriate rate. We're going to end that program. And I cannot be more clear than saying that a Progressive Conservative government under Tim Hudak will scrap the Green Energy Act.

Secondly, we are going to make sure there are sensible trade arrangements with neighbouring jurisdictions. If we can get cheaper power from Manitoba or Quebec, or we can export without a loss, we're going to do it; we're going to revisit that. I once was in a debate about four years ago, maybe even three years ago, with a Liberal now-cabinet minister who told us, "We can't deal with the province of Quebec because we don't know if they're going to separate." That's not an appropriate response to our energy issues in Ontario. We have to make sensible trade agreements so that my friend Steve Clark in Brockville doesn't have to deal with a neighbouring community on the other side of the St. Lawrence Seaway trying to come over to poach his businesses, Fortune 500 companies—because in upstate New York, they actually have cheaper power than they do in Brockville, Ontario. We have to stop that. Ontario's Progressive Conservative leader, Tim Hudak, has made that commitment, and I'll stand with Steve Clark in trying to get those jobs back to eastern Ontario. That's what we're going to do.

Third, it is without a doubt one of the biggest scandals in Ontario today: the Hydro One over-billing scheme and

the challenges that they have as a result of their utter incapability—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Incompetence.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod:—incompetence and mismanagement.

We also saw before Christmas that the Auditor General came out and proved once and for all that the sense of entitlement of OPG has run away for far too long. People in this room without a pension and people at home watching without a pension are subsidizing, on their hydro bills, pension plans of the OPG that we could only dream of. That has to stop. Under the Ontario Progressive Conservative plan, our leader, Tim Hudak, has said we will monetize the OPG, we will monetize Hydro One, and we will make them more accountable. Again, I ask you, if Hydro One can't find my constituent, why can Enbridge? Why can the company Propane Levac? Why can other companies find my consumers or my constituents—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is spinning her chair and talking loud and thinking I can't see it or hear it. I would suggest that she cut it back a bit, because it's not fooling me.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Speaker. It's not fooling the people of the province of Ontario either. They're tired of this government. They want an election. They want a party in place that actually has a vision for where to take the province. They know we have a plan on energy; they know we have a plan on bringing jobs back. So let's get at it.

Clinging to the office tower here on the second floor with Kathleen Wynne's fingernails going down the wood panelling so she can't be removed from office—is a pathetic reason to try and be Premier. You either have to have a vision to be Premier, you have to understand who you want to help, you have to understand why you want to be here, or you should leave.

I think it's time that we had a provincial election. I think it's time that we actually talked about how we can get Ontario out of the rut she's been in for 10 years under the management of this government. We have had a decade of darkness, a decade of decline. It's time for a change in the province of Ontario. We're offering that.

I go back. The reason I decided that, yes, I wanted to speak to supply after the government decided to change their speaking order today and not deal with the World Trade Organization ruling that has found them in non-compliance and has embarrassed our nation—I was supposed to have spoken to that for an hour today, but they decided they didn't want to come into compliance with the WTO; they wanted to embarrass Stephen Harper. That was more important for them, that we talk about supply.

So I decided what I would do this morning when I woke up was to talk about the people I met. I thought I'd tell you about the experiences that they had. I thought I

would tell you what's happening in Ontario outside Wellesley Street. I thought I'd talk to you about the constituents that my colleagues have who are concerned about their future. An election, for those people, can't come soon enough.

We're dealing with real people's problems. This isn't a think tank; it isn't 37 panels of good buddies from downtown Toronto sipping lattes and having some cappuccino. This isn't about the union elites that want to meet with Kathleen Wynne. This isn't about the Working Families Coalition that's really about big unions, not about real people. This is about the people that my colleagues represent.

I see him now, my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills. I had the opportunity to be in his riding as well; we share a boundary. We went to his riding. The number one issue is energy.

They're tired in Carleton-Mississippi Mills, they're tired in Nepean-Carleton, they're tired in Huron-Bruce, they're tired in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, they're tired in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, they're tired in Northumberland-Quinte West, they're tired in Oxford, and they're tired in Perth-Wellington. They want an election. Under this government, rural Ontario is languishing.

I look at my colleague from Perth-Wellington. We had an opportunity to do a phone-in show on a radio station in the month of January, and the number one issue people were talking about—what was it? Yell it out. It was energy. His community is like mine in many respects. Those people who are being hit with high energy prices are also the same people they put out of the work in the horse racing industry. I've never seen an economic plan like it.

0940

One thing we have to do in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, in order to turn this province around, is again make energy a focus of our economy, make sure that energy is the number one issue for the people we represent and make sure that we turn this province around with affordable energy rates, so that we can once again lead Confederation, and I believe we can.

People come from all over the world to marvel at this province. They saw what Bill Davis did to build it. They saw Mike Harris turn it around and bring in a million jobs, and they will see Tim Hudak do the same thing. We will have clear priorities. It will be completely different from the mess we've had, that decade of decline, the decade of despair, the decade of darkness. It was a time when they took in more revenues than they'd ever taken in their life, yet still posted record deficits.

Our third-largest spending priority in the province of Ontario today is the debt and the deficit. It ranks this way: health care, education, the debt and the deficit to pay for the cancelled gas plants, the debt and the deficit to pay for the scandal at Ornge, the debt and the deficit to pay for the eHealth scandal, the debt and the deficit to pay for all of the Presto and Metrolinx problems—the debt and the deficit to deal with all of the scandal, the little black box of scandal that that government has given to the province of Ontario in the last decade.

That concerns me, as a mother, to no end. When I think of my daughter and I put the three or four kids into the car or the minivan and we're driving—this government has loaded \$20,000 worth of debt on each one of those children's heads, and they're only eight years old. They're paying for the problems and mistakes of this government, and the only party with a plan to get us out of it and put us back on track here in the province of Ontario is our party with our leader, Tim Hudak.

I think in the weeks ahead, we will have confidence motions. I can tell you, we had 12 yesterday. It shocked me to no end, and my constituents as well, that the New Democrats under Andrea Horwath stood up 12 times yesterday to defend this Liberal government, even after they found out last week that the OPP had launched a search warrant into the cancelled gas plants and the deleted emails. To me, that was quite a shocker, and it was shocking that they would stand up and provide confidence to that level of corruption, but they did.

Speaker, I can tell you this, and I can tell you right now: We are going to be on the side of people who want change in Ontario. We are the ones with a responsible plan. We are the ones who are going to continue to work on behalf of the people of Ontario whom we have met with. We have brought their shared experiences to the floor of this assembly, and we are going to do something about it.

So as I conclude, I want to thank all members for this spirited discussion. I thank them for letting me have the opportunity to speak for 40 minutes, almost uninterrupted. I'm going to have a wonderful time going back into my community to tell them what our plan is, and I'm looking forward, when there is actually an election, to being part of that change that restores Ontario to its rightful place as a leader in Confederation, under the leadership of Premier Hudak, with people like John Yakabuski, Lisa Thompson and Doug Holyday. I call him Doug Ford sometimes—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But sometimes I make the mistake.

I can tell you one thing: It's time for a change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of New Democrats, I want to speak and actually talk to the point that we're dealing with here today and what we dealt with yesterday, and that is both the issues of the concurrence votes on estimates and on the supply motion that's before us today.

To listen to the Conservatives, they say this is a prime opportunity—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean-Carleton and her group: We just listened intently to your presentation—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You have my apologies, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): —and I think now it would be nice of you to give respect to the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sorry, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): So if you want to have your little conference, take it outside.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, this debate is about supply and about concurrences that have been before the House. To listen to the Conservatives speak, they say, "Oh, this is a real opportunity for all of us in the opposition to gang together and to bring the government down and to have an election." Well, listen, there may very well be an election in this province, but the province of Ontario needs the authority to pay the bills. These Tea Party Republicans, the Conservative Party of Ontario, quite frankly, are taking a play out of the Republican playbook in the United States. They're saying, "Let's take Ontario and push it over the fiscal cliff and then have an election."

Well, can you imagine what would happen if we actually did what Tim Hudak wants? We would be in a situation, as of the vote yesterday, for the province of Ontario to have lost the authority to pay the bills. That means to say that air ambulances wouldn't fly. That means to say that ambulances would close. That means to say that Elections Ontario couldn't even run the darn election.

So what kind of plan does Tim Hudak have? It's more of the same. It's what Tim Hudak has been doing for the last two and a half years. He comes into this minority Parliament as the party who's in the best position to be able to influence the government in a minority Parliament, and he says, "You know what? I'm dealing myself out. I'm going to be the oppositional leader who doesn't propose anything and who just stands on the sideline and swipes at the government, swipes at the opposition NDP," and does what they've been doing for two and a half years.

I think Ontarians are starting to understand. If New Democrats won by-elections in places like Waterloo, London, Windsor and recently in Niagara Falls, it has to do with the public that has looked at what Tim Hudak is doing, and they're saying, "I'm not buying it." The public understands, as we do, and Conservatives agree, that there is a displeasure with the Liberal government. We all understand they've done a bunch of things that we're really not happy with, everything from the energy file—where they stole the Conservative plan to deregulate and privatize hydro, then the Liberals did it themselves. We understand that there are issues, but there's a time and a place to deal with it.

For Ontario to be in the position, as of yesterday, to have not had the ability to pay the bills, I say to Tim Hudak and the Conservatives, I just don't know where you guys are coming from, other than saying you're a bunch of Tea Party Republicans who have taken your plays out of Mitt Romney and others in the Congress of the United States and have decided to try to push Ontario over the fiscal cliff.

There is a responsibility with being elected. There's a responsibility, that the public puts onto us as elected

members, to do what is right in this Legislature. There are times to be hyper-partisan. I get it. We all do it, from the government side to the opposition side. There are times to propose and there are times to oppose, but this is not a time to oppose. This is a supply motion.

So, let's be clear about what this means. If we were to listen to Tim Hudak and we were today to vote down the supply motion, as of the time of the vote, Ontario would lose the ability to pay the bills.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That is wrong.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That means that there would be no authority—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: See, my learned friend from the Conservative caucus says I'm wrong. Go and check the standing orders and go and check the precedents. What happens when you vote down a supply bill? The government loses the authority to pay the bills. It means to say that all of Ontario would shut down because this Legislature would not give the authority to the government of Ontario to pay the bills. Then they would say, "Well, we just have to go to the Lieutenant Governor and the Lieutenant Governor would issue a warrant in order to pay the bills. We don't have to worry about that." Do you think for one minute that the Lieutenant Governor, once this House votes by majority to turn down the supply motion or to turn down concurrences, would all of a sudden undo the mess that this House created? The Lieutenant Governor is not the one to make that decision. It is this Legislature that makes this decision. And for Conservatives, under Tim Hudak, to all of a sudden try to pretend as if this is another opportunity in order to bring down the Liberal government and that we're propping up the Liberals is preposterous. You know what I'm upset about? We're propping up Hudak—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew. I guess you were ignoring me. Twice I asked you to keep it down.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So I say, really the question here is—we're propping up Tim Hudak's bad leadership. That's what the Conservatives are asking us to do. A leader with common sense, something that I thought the Tories really believed in, would understand the difference between voting down a throne speech and voting down a budget. When it comes to supply and concurrence, it means to say you've lost the authority to spend the money and to pay the bills of the province of Ontario. I think Conservatives, who are supposed to be the party who understand fiscal matters and are supposed to be the ones who really get the economy would be the first ones to figure out you cannot throw this province into a fiscal crisis. It makes absolutely no sense.

0950

The Tories are doing what the Tories do best and what Tim Hudak has learned over the two and a half years here. They've decided that they are not going to in any way recognize what the people of Ontario told us in the

last election, and that is, “We are not giving the government a majority. We’re creating a minority Parliament. We want people to come into this Legislature and take their responsibilities seriously, to oppose when necessary, to propose when it’s right, and always to remember what’s important to the people back home.”

For Tim Hudak to all of a sudden say that voting this down would just cause an election and would have no consequence whatsoever on what happens in Ontario is preposterous.

The rules are clear. This is a supply bill. If the House votes down supply, it means the government loses the authority to pay the bills. That means the jails close down, the hospitals close down, much in the way of our provincial transportation system closes down—hospitals, education and the rest. I don’t believe that’s what Ontarians want. Some Ontarians—and I would agree, probably a majority—are very upset with this government. I get that. But what they don’t want is for all of us here in this Legislature to play games, create a fiscal crisis in order to have a provincial election, and to have nobody have the ability to get provincial services until such time that a new government would be formed, because the reality is it would probably take about 60 days for all of that to happen. By the time you have an election, by the time you gazette the members and have the members reported into the House, by the time you have a throne speech and by the time you can reintroduce the Supply Act, you’re probably talking about 60 days. Can we really afford to shut down all government services that the province of Ontario gives for 60 days?

Unfortunately, my aunt Doris just died two days ago. She died in the United States. If she was in Canada and wanted to go to an emergency room, she couldn’t have gotten to the hospital, period.

So Tim Hudak—I just say that leadership is somewhat questionable. For these guys to all of a sudden play politics with an issue like supply doesn’t make any sense.

The last point I’m going to make is this—I checked this fact out yesterday: There has not been a case in the history of this province where a government has fallen on a supply motion or on an interim supply bill. It has not happened, and for Tim Hudak to try to say otherwise flies in the face of reality and speaks volumes about the Conservatives. They are about politics. They’re about the politics of self-interest. They are about trying to create a fiscal crisis in order to do the things that are to their political advantage. If that’s what Tim Hudak’s leadership is all about, I say it fails the test.

Yes, I will vote for supply, along with the rest of our caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It’s a great opportunity for me to rise in my place today and speak, after having had a chance to listen to the two members of both opposition caucuses speak on this. Far be it from me to ever stand in my place and perhaps inadvertently or accidentally get in the way of two of the members opposite doing a

wonderful job of attacking each other and demonstrating to the people of Ontario yet again—not for the first time and hopefully not for the last—why neither is particularly fit to show leadership for this province.

It’s funny, as I was driving down to Queen’s Park this morning and I was thinking about what I might say with respect to the Supply Act and how important it is to make sure that we can continue to pay our bills, as was mentioned earlier—I was looking forward to the discussion in the Legislature. I didn’t know that I’d be showing up and I’d have the opportunity to listen to the member from Nepean—Carleton provide us with sort of a day in her life or a week in her life or a month in her life. It was fascinating to hear her talk about the tour that she has taken across this province and rhyme off the names of so many other candidates running—

Interjection: Leadership tour?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: If I was the leader of her party, I’d be a little bit concerned about the work that she might be doing. It sounded an awful lot like a leadership tour.

The bottom line is, we’re here today to talk about the Supply Act and why it’s important. It has been mentioned by others in this place. I just want to make sure it is understood that we need to move forward on this. We need to pass this legislation to make sure that Ontario pays its bills and to make sure—we say that at a high level, but in a very granular way, what that means is that we’ll be able to continue paying the nurses, the doctors, the teachers, the folks who work at municipalities. We’ll be able to continue to provide financial and income support for those who need it: people with disabilities and special needs, children’s aid societies, and the list goes on. Why anybody on the opposite side would want to put the province of Ontario into a position where we couldn’t continue to pay those individuals working in these kinds of settings is beyond me. It’s beyond the people of my community in Vaughan, and I’m certain that the people who elected those members of the official opposition, the PC Party, to come to this place expect better. I hope that we will continue moving forward on the Supply Act, that it will get passed, and we will return to doing those things that the people of our respective communities elected us to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Last call for further debate. Seeing none, pursuant to standing order 64, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 164, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

I heard a nay. In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry, they didn’t have five members. Sorry.

The vote is carried. This bill, therefore, is ordered for third reading.

Second reading agreed to.

SUPPLY ACT, 2014

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2014

Mr. Gerretsen, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014 / Projet de loi 164, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2014.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, you'll be very pleased to know that there's no further business at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0959 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of visitors—of guests.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're all friends here.

The member from York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would agree with you that we're all friends.

Attending in the Legislature this morning, I'd like you to help me welcome Debbie Gordon, Josh Garfinkel, Ian McLaurin and Carmela Marshall, who are here this morning as guests of my colleague John O'Toole. We certainly appreciate their participation here today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome one of my friends and, actually, my council representative in Lakeshore and Belle River, Dave Monk, who is a councillor from the town of Lakeshore. He's here as a part of the delegation at the OGRA/ROMA conference to speak about municipal issues.

Hon. Michael Chan: It's really my pleasure to welcome everyone who's here from the Ontario Arts Council visiting Queen's Park today, and in particular the chair, Martha Durdin, and CEO Peter Caldwell—as well as two members from my riding of Markham-Unionville, Eric and Malarville.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to welcome David Adair, from the Georgian Bay Symphony; Ian Boddy,

from the Tom Thomson Art Gallery; and Heather Fullerton, from the Georgina Arts Centre, in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure today to welcome some staff members as well as a co-op student from my riding. I have Sandra Troulinous, Angelica Garcia-Hennings and Haley Naso. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to welcome my wife, Shaminder, who's here today to observe our son Robin, who's the page captain.

As well, I will be joined shortly by some friends from my riding. Mr. Jagmohan Sahota will be bringing his guests who are here from India and who operate a very well-known college in India: Dr. Zora Singh, Tajinder Singh, Meera Mehta, Vinay Kohli and Sagmitra Singh.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think it was more important to get the applause for your wife than it was for your guests. I just wanted to let you know that.

Introduction of guests?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd also like to welcome everyone here today from the Ontario Arts Council and introduce Brad Copping, a glass artist from my riding—his shop is in Apsley—and Diane Davey and Dawn Cattapan. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. David Orazietti: Given we're introducing invasive species legislation today, I want to introduce Steve Hounsell, chair of the Ontario Biodiversity Council; Dave Ireland, Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network; Kim Gavine, Conservation Ontario; Julie Cayley, Ducks Unlimited; Nancy Goucher, Environmental Defence; Gillian McEachern, Environmental Defence; Dilhari Fernando, Invasive Species Centre; Mark Stabb, Nature Conservancy of Canada; Angelo Lombardo, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters; and Daniel Pujdak, Chiefs of Ontario.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to welcome the students and staff from Southwood Secondary School, my alma mater, to Queen's Park today. They are going to be witnessing proceedings here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Premier. My question is for the Premier.

We heard loud and clear, during our finance tour and pre-budget hearings: high taxes, skyrocketing energy rates, and red tape. But more than anything, Premier, there is absolutely no support for your provincial gas tax increase.

Premier, in the last 10 years, you have doubled our debt, tripled our hydro rates, and now you want to dig deeper into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. Why is it that to solve the problems you've created, your default is always to increase taxes—health tax, diamond

tax, all sorts of new taxes? When you spend the money on rich subsidies for wind power, Ornge and cancelling gas plants—people understand.

Will you support my opposition motion today and commit to not raising taxes on students, families and seniors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess I would just respond to the member opposite by saying, why is it that his party is not interested in long-term thinking? Why is it that his party is not interested in making investments in the people, in the infrastructure and in the business climate that we know are going to be necessary in order for this province to thrive? That really is the question that I think has to be answered at this moment.

Our plan is to invest in infrastructure and, yes, that includes transit, but it also includes roads and bridges and water systems across the province. I don't know if the member opposite had an opportunity to go to ROMA/OGRA, but there's not a municipality in this province that isn't interested in stable, predictable infrastructure funding. There's no plan coming from the other side on how they would do that. We have that plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, your tax-and-spend government is killing businesses and hurting families.

Speaking of OGRA/ROMA, let me share with you some of what we heard. The mayor of North Bay described your gas tax plan this way: "It's an awesome program if the idea is to drive manufacturers and companies out of the province."

The mayor of East Ferris wrote to you last month and called your gas tax "another assault on rural municipalities."

The Trillium Automobile Dealers warned that "hiking taxes on drivers and vehicles will increase the cost of using public transit."

Premier, we've heard loud and clear: high taxes, skyrocketing energy rates, and red tape. Will you support our motion today and not increase taxes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've had the opportunity to see the mayor of North Bay within the last few weeks, and I saw the mayor of East Ferris yesterday. I know that they are very committed to having the right infrastructure built in their communities. That's why I put the question to the member opposite: How can he not support stable, predictable funding for infrastructure? How can he not support \$100 million a year in roads and bridges and water system funding that municipalities across the province can count on?

That's the kind of investment that I know municipalities across Ontario need. That's why it's part of our plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, you're bringing in nearly \$50 billion more in revenue since the time you first took power, and now you want to add a 10-cents-a-litre hike in gas.

Here's what Bill Love had to say at our pre-budget consultations: "It's not a revenue problem; it's really a spending problem." I think he said it best.

Now, you're also planning to raise corporate taxes by 0.5%. Listen to what the Ontario chamber's Liam McGuinty had to say—and, yes, I think you know who that is: "The bulk of studies show that lowering corporate income taxes has a significant impact on investment."

Premier, you don't need that extra money. But what we do need is real leadership here. I'll ask you once more: Will you support our motion today that promises no new gasoline, no new corporate or no new payroll taxes?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just say to the member opposite that I think it would be a very good opportunity, given that this is his line of questioning, for him to talk to the municipal leaders from across the province and tell them that he actually doesn't believe in investing in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't think there needs to be an investment in their roads and bridges and in transit. I think that would be important. I think he could go on to say that, furthermore, he believes that cutting education workers and cutting health care workers, cancelling full-day kindergarten, cutting tuition supports—that's what their plan is.

1040

We think the reverse of that is what is needed. We believe that investment in people, making sure that they have the education supports that they need, making sure that municipalities have the infrastructure that they need—and that we would partner with them on that. We believe that those are the kinds of investments that are needed right now.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question, as well, is to the Premier. I can think of a billion reasons why Ontarians should be wary of your government's new gas tax for Toronto transit. It's like a billion popping red flags. The people of this province have seen time and time again that this tired, old Liberal government can't manage their money. They are tired of giving more to the provincial treasury, and that's because this government consistently finds ways to squander their hard-earned tax dollars at a rate of about \$1 billion at a time. The Ornge scandal, the gas plant scandal, the eHealth scandal, the Hydro One scandal, the miscalculation of the hydro debt retirement charge are billion-dollar babies of Premier Mom and her predecessor, Premier Dad.

Why is the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

I'm going to ask the member to address the Premier properly, as we do for everyone in this place. No first names. No personal names. Titles only. Please finish. You have 10—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why is the Premier asking Ontarians for more money when she can't manage the money that they send to Queen's Park now?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So let's just—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard it over here again, and if I hear it again, I'll ask the person to withdraw or leave. It's enough. We're respectful in this place.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been called worse things than a mom.

It is extremely important to me that, in answer to both the questions from the opposition and, in fact, the questions from the third party, it is clear that we have said that we are going to invest in transit. That is true. We're going to invest in infrastructure. There have been a number of reports and a number of suggestions about how we might do that. We will bring a plan forward in our budget. I know that it's in the interests of the opposition to focus on one particular revenue tool and to ride that one. We have not made a decision on how we will put together that plan. That is the work that we are doing right now.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that we know very clearly that avoiding investment in infrastructure, as the opposition did in the past and would do again, is irresponsible, is not in the best interests of this province, either now or in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I have to laugh at her. Just last week, we had a sinkhole in Waller Street in Ottawa. That's the infrastructure of the province of Ontario. It's crumbling after a decade of decline.

The Premier should admit that she does not have a plan. She just wants the money. Her claim for the people of Ottawa and London and Windsor and Sudbury, to wait until her budget to tell them how much money they're going to have to send to Toronto for Toronto taxes, is a stall tactic. This government is desperate for cash, and she doesn't care where it comes from. She just wants it, to spend their money. They've had an inability to manage the economy, whether it's in the energy sector, whether it's jobs and the economy, or right now with the transit plan here in the GTA. This is the great province of Ontario. She has squandered the opportunity.

Will the Premier admit she won't tell us what she's going to do with that transit tax because she doesn't know?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is exactly the kind of rhetoric that has made it so impossible for governments to take action on important long-term issues for decades.

The fact is that we have been investing in transit since we came into office. We've been investing in infrastructure, and we exponentially have increased the number of dollars we've put into infrastructure compared to what

their government did. The fact is, we are going to continue to make those investments.

We are having an honest conversation with people across the province about the needs for infrastructure. That's why the \$100-million infrastructure fund for roads and bridges, for northern and rural communities—that's why that fund is in place, because those communities said to us that they need predictable infrastructure funding. We need partnerships—municipal, federal, provincial—working together. That's the process we're working on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This Premier has had a decade to put forward a plan and to spend money wisely. She had an opportunity this past year to invest in the 401, but people were losing tires on the side of the road. She had an opportunity to deal with the sinkholes in Ottawa, but they're still happening. She had an opportunity to build subways in Toronto; she didn't do it.

She wants the people's money, and she wants billions of it from all across this province, for just downtown Toronto, but she doesn't know what she's going to use it for.

The other problem this Premier has is that she is losing jobs, she is hiking energy rates, and she has no plan. She wants to cling to power.

She has an opportunity this afternoon; she can support our motion. Will she do it? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm sorry, but the rant is just ridiculous—\$500 million for the Queensway Carleton Hospital—in the member's riding, Mr. Speaker—and \$2 billion a year for both the southern and the northern highway programs. It is just ridiculous to suggest that this government has not invested in infrastructure. We have done it year over year; we are going to continue to do it.

The reality is that there was an infrastructure deficit when we came into office in 2003, and that infrastructure deficit had been built, had been left, by the previous government. We've been climbing out of that hole, we're going to keep climbing, and we're going to make those investments for the future.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. More and more studies show that experts are figuring out what families have been telling us for some time. Families feel like they're being squeezed right out of the middle class. An internal federal government document says that the middle class is being "hollowed out."

Given all that, is the Premier ready to back away from her plan to hit households with new taxes, tolls and fees?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Same question, different party. It's surprising, coming from the NDP, that there isn't a question about how they would build transit and how we would work together as a collective, all of us, to make sure that the investments are made for the future.

Nonetheless, I understand that people in the middle class—that there are constraints and there are pressures on people. That's why we have made many of the changes that we've made, whether it is expanding the 30%-off tuition grant—230,000 students received that last year, and we've now expanded that to five-year programs.

Securing retirement with pension reform: You know, if there is any issue that is of concern to people across the middle class, it's what their retirement is going to look like. I'm surprised that the leader of the third party isn't working with us on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, I asked whether the Premier agreed with her federal leader, who said this weekend, "The middle class is already having a hard time making ends meet, and struggling with debt. Tax increases for them are not in the cards and not on the table."

The Premier didn't answer my question, so I'm going to ask her again: Does the Premier agree with her federal leader that middle-class families experiencing hard times shouldn't be asked to pay more?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said yesterday, we need a federal partner. It would be terrific to have a federal government that would work with us. If we had a federal government that could work with us and that understood that having a long-term infrastructure plan was something that was critical, then we might be having a different discussion. We don't have a federal government that is interested in doing that, unfortunately. I will continue to call on the federal government, but it may take a change of government to actually get that in place.

I just want to talk about some of the other things that we have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And by that—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Justin Trudeau isn't the only one concerned about middle-class families. During the Liberal leadership race, one candidate made it clear that this was the wrong way for Ontario to go:

"Lots of people are calling for an 'adult conversation' about road pricing, property tax hikes, and even regional sales taxes....

"Glen Murray does not think it's the right way to go....

"The middle class is taxed out."

Does the Premier agree with her Minister of Transportation? Is she actually ready to back away from her plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to back away from a plan to build transit. We have not brought forward our plan in terms of the revenue stream. The leader of the third party and the members of the Conservative caucus who are interested in focusing on a tool and an issue within a broader discussion—fine; that's their prerogative. The fact is that we have not brought forward our plan, but will I back away from building transit? I will not.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think that the members for Parkdale—High Park, Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Davenport, Beaches—East York, Hamilton Mountain, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Toronto—Danforth and Trinity—Spadina, all of whom said, "I pledge to support new ways to raise funds for a better transportation network in the GTHA," don't want to back away from building transit either, so I stand with those members.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier can argue that Justin Trudeau's views don't apply to Ontario. She can claim that the views of the Minister of Transportation are irrelevant. But I want to ask her about her own party as well. The 2011 Liberal platform specifically and clearly ruled out new taxes. Page 53 of the Liberal platform says that they will keep their promises "without resorting to higher taxes." Does the Premier agree with the promises she made to the people of Ontario when she was elected?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are committed to continuing to build transit. I have not said what the plan will be. We are going to bring the plan forward in our budget. There are a number of suggestions that have been made about how to put in place a revenue stream to build transit. We are going to bring forward a plan to do that.

In case the member opposite had not noticed, I've only been the Premier for the last year. This is a new government, a new Premier, and we are putting our plan in place. I would expect that the leader—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would expect, Mr. Speaker, that the leader of the third party would support, at least in principle, the notion of building new transit and having the money to pay for that transit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, our economy is made up of people, and if they're not doing well, our economy will not do well and will not prosper. The Premier seems determined to move ahead with her plan to hit families with new costs that will make life more expensive for them, and she doesn't seem to care that everyone from her Minister of Transportation to her federal leader disagrees with her and agrees with us. Is

this Premier finally ready to back away from this wrong-headed move?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I completely agree with the leader of the third party that if people are not doing well, then the economy is not doing well. If people can't get to work, if businesses can't move their goods around and can't expand, then they can't create the jobs that people need.

We're going to continue to support people. We're going to support them in the ways that we have. We are going to continue with the reduction on tuition. We're going to continue on the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit. We're going to continue to modernize the child care system. We're going to continue to put the Ontario Child Benefit in people's hands. Those are all very important issues. And we are going to invest in infrastructure and in transit to make sure that in the immediate future, there are jobs, and that in the longer-term future we have the economic growth that we need for the people in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, adding new taxes, tolls and fees will make life more expensive for families, and they're already struggling with the highest hydro bills and auto insurance rates in the entire country.

Yesterday, the Premier said she's "very cognizant of the burdens that middle-class people are feeling." Well, if that's the case, I don't understand why she doesn't feel that she has an obligation to listen to Ontario families, to listen to her federal leader, to listen to her transportation minister and back away from her plan to put more taxes, tolls and fees on the backs of those families.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have spent a lot of time listening to people, Mr. Speaker. I have travelled the entire province in the last year, and I have spoken to people in every part of this province, in every corner of the province. I agree with the member opposite that people are feeling stretched; they are feeling pushed. They want a certain economic future. They want to know that there's some stability. They want to know that jobs are going to be there.

So it's our responsibility as government to make sure that we address the issues that may be holding the economy back. Infrastructure is one of those. So while we work to put more money in people's hands by reducing auto insurance—and that is happening—by reducing electricity prices, by making sure that young people have access to post-secondary, we also have to invest in the infrastructure that will allow the economy to thrive.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the government House leader. The House leader still has an opportunity to walk away from his job-killing gas tax. Business leaders in his riding are telling us loud and clear that this government has the wrong priorities. He should also find it troubling that in an article published on April 5 in the

Waterloo Region Record, the Premier said that there are no guarantees Kitchener–Waterloo will get to use any new money to fund transit projects for the region.

Now, as the government's lone wolf from a region where a Liberal MPP qualifies as an endangered species, I would think he would attempt to put his constituents' interests first. But to my amazement, Mr. Speaker, the government House leader said, "We need to have a conversation about what's going to work for Toronto and Hamilton (first)."

Will the government House leader stand up for his constituents and say no to the job-killing gas tax, or will he continue to toe the party line at their expense?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Forgive me; I'm going to provide the member with an opportunity to either rephrase his question or redirect it. It has to be to his portfolio, which is not the government House leader, under the circumstances. As minister, he's the minister responsible for government services. So I would ask you to decide how to either—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Order.

I would ask the member to either redirect the question to the appropriate minister or to rephrase the question so that it fits into his portfolio. You have that choice. Please.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'll direct that question to the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, in Kitchener–Waterloo, we are making the biggest transportation and transit investments in the history of this province. We are working with Chair Seiling and with the member from Kitchener Centre to build the most amazing rapid transit line. We are now buying up and building tracks to get two-way GO service.

What is his party doing? We put four GO trains in, and the Tories take four Via trains away. Your party has just overseen the biggest reduction in rail service to Kitchener in the history of the country, and you have the nerve to ask that question?

Why don't you call the federal members from your area and ask them to put the four Via trains back? Then we'd actually have eight. Put four Via trains back so you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I want to know who's in charge over there. The transportation minister says that there's going to be money to be used for transit in the area; the Premier made no commitment that gas tax revenue will be used for our transit area.

I want to know if the people of Kitchener Centre and Waterloo region will stand up for this Toronto-first strategy, at the expense of residents of Waterloo region.

It's a simple fact which the government does not seem to understand: When the cost of doing business goes up, jobs go down. Failed green energy policies have driven the cost of doing business up, and the gas tax threatens to do the same thing. The Ontario Trucking Association and the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce both agree that a 10-cent gas tax, road tolls and other misguided revenue tools will lead to more job losses.

Will they finally stand up for residents in Waterloo region and say yes to jobs and no to more taxes?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm curious. I'm still waiting for the answer from the member. There were four Via trains. We added four GO trains. I know his math isn't very good, but I think even the PhD could figure out that that was eight. The Tories took four away. We're back to four.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It seems that I can't get order until I actually stop everything going on. Stop the clock, please.

The member from Oxford, the member from Halton, and the member from Cambridge, who asked the questions, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The other thing we're doing with the member from Kitchener Centre is, we are assembling land and building Highway 7, which is critically important.

GO service, LRT service and Highway 7: That sounds like the best deal the people in Kitchener have had in several generations. Why is that happening? Because we are spending 2% of the province's GDP on infrastructure.

They spent 0.25%. I want to conclude by commending Mr. Flaherty and the Tories. They are consistent federally. They're spending 0.25%—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. During the economic downturn, Sarnia lost more than 7% of their workforce, and it still hasn't recovered. There are families in Sarnia who used to rely on a paycheque from Ethyl in Corunna, Dow or the UBE parts plant, but those jobs have left, and 5,000 jobs that used to be in Sarnia before the recession haven't returned.

Does the Premier think that the Liberal status quo is working for communities like Sarnia?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I am proud and happy to say that there are 8,000 more people working in the Sarnia area than there were a year ago today. There's no question that this is an area that has been challenged

by the recession and the change in manufacturing. It's an incredibly important part of this province.

I met, in fact, just yesterday with local leadership from Lambton county, talking about the chemical sector. I know that there are many people in the Sarnia area that are employed in that important sector. But most importantly in terms of indicators, the unemployment rate in January 2013 was 9%; in January of this year, it is down to 6.9%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Premier: The Liberal government claimed the HST would create 600,000 jobs, which we have yet to see. They claimed no-strings-attached giveaways would create jobs, but in south-western Ontario, anyone can see that that plan isn't working.

According to the Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board, unemployment in their community is 8%; in Guelph, it's 7%; in London, it's 8%; and in Niagara, it's a whopping 9%.

Clearly, the status quo isn't working. Ontario needs a smarter plan. Will the Premier admit that this province needs a targeted plan that rewards job creators, gets hydro rates under control and provides some relief for small businesses, or is she going to stick with the status quo?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The facts from Stats Canada show there are 8,000 more people working in Windsor and Sarnia than there were a year ago today. The unemployment rate has dropped down to 6.9%. This is proof that our jobs plan is working.

Certainly, the discussions that I had yesterday with members who are concerned about the chemical sector, which is one of the sectors that's extremely important in that entire area—they were very positive about the outlook. They appreciate the efforts the province has been making to partner with them to make sure that the progress that we're beginning to see continues, and it's progress that we're seeing right around this province, with almost 450,000 jobs created since the bottom of the recession, and 80% of those jobs in the private sector. We added 7,800 youth jobs last month alone in this province. We're seeing the progress and we're seeing the importance of our jobs plan.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Ontario's agri-food sector is a very strong driver for the Ontario economy and it's one of the priorities of this government. However, it's also an industry that's had its challenges of late, especially in the Leamington and Essex county areas. There have been a number of stories recently—today as well—in the news

stating that a company may be looking to move its business into the Heinz facility.

Now, I know our government's been very, very active in this area, but today, Speaker, through you to the minister, would he please provide this House with an update on what our government has been doing to assist the community of Leamington?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member from Oakville. Although I can't talk about the specifics—the reference to the articles in the media that have appeared today—I can say that since day one I and many members of the government, including, of course, the Premier, have been working very collaboratively with the local leadership, the business and political leadership in Leamington and the Leamington area, as well as representatives of the employees who were affected by the Heinz closure.

I want to say that the mayor of Leamington has been very proactive on this as well. I spoke with him last week. Of course, the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corp., led by Sandra Papatello, has been very involved. And can I say, most importantly, as well, Teresa Piruzza, the MPP from Windsor West, has been very active, working with the company and prospective investors to bring jobs to this important part of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Through you, back to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, I'm sure we're all pleased to hear about that ongoing support the government has provided in the Leamington area.

Now, Leamington, like the region of Chatham—Kent—Essex, is the hub of Ontario's agri-food sector. I'm sure that all the workers and the growers in that area are going to be pleased to hear that efforts are being made that are ongoing to ensure economic growth in the area and to make sure that growth continues.

Speaker, today, through you, can the minister update the House on any concrete and specific examples of the work our government is doing to attract new business to this wonderful area?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, it's our role as government to do everything we can to support this community as they move through this challenging time. I have to say that I've been deeply involved since day one in doing what I can to make sure that investment in jobs comes to this community. We're working closely with Heinz and with potential investors, working with them about Heinz's plans for their plant so we can work with the community to move forward.

Of course, late last fall, we provided funds through our communities in transition fund as well to support the workers who were affected and will be affected by the layoffs. But I'm optimistic that we're going to find a solution that's going to bring new, good, high-paying, sustainable jobs to Leamington and the Leamington area. Quite frankly, it's due to the hard work of so many great, dedicated individuals in the business community, through the development corporations in the Windsor—Essex area,

the mayor and his staff in Leamington, and the government officials working hard on this.

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is for the Deputy Premier. In the past 12 months, Ontario has lost 30,000 vital manufacturing jobs. You will know that London, and specifically your riding of London North Centre, and all of southwestern Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'll listen carefully to this, but I'm getting a sense that there seems to be a theme where you're going after somebody in a riding. That's not appropriate. Make sure you ask your question to the person whose portfolio is responsible for the question.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, then, this is for the Premier. In the past 12 months, since you've become the Premier, we've lost 30,000 vital manufacturing jobs. You will know that London and all of southwestern Ontario has lost a number of companies: Invacare, Kellogg's, Tender Tootsies, Worthington Cylinders, Westcast Industries, Imperial Oil lubricants and Ethyl Corp.

1110

Premier, these job losses are occurring across southwestern Ontario. Why is your government persisting with your half-baked idea to raise gas taxes 10 cents a litre to pay for Toronto's transit? Premier, with thousands and thousands of jobs being lost in London, do you think now is the time for a \$2.6-billion tax grab?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is going to want to speak to the job creation that has gone on in the southwest. But I just want to, once again, say there have not been decisions made about a revenue stream and what tools would be used or what tools would not be used. I just want to be very clear about that. We're very sensitive to whatever we do to have a revenue stream in place to build infrastructure—that it be fair, that it be dealt with in a way that is sensitive to how people are struggling in their day-to-day lives, and that, by region, the money that's raised in one region is used to build the infrastructure in that region.

The attempts to cloud the waters on this issue when what we're talking about is continuing to invest in infrastructure across the province, I think, are really irresponsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, back to the Premier. Of course, Premier, you are from Toronto so it's no wonder you are calling for all of Ontario to pay its share in the costs for public transportation in downtown Toronto—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. Finish, please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: And Premier, despite all their talk, the leader of the NDP refuses to hold your government to account and actually continues to support you each and every move.

Premier, here's a nice and easy one for you: In January, London's unemployment climbed higher once again, as 3,300 more London residents lost their jobs. With so many London residents currently out of work, do you think it's right to force the city of London drivers to pay for Toronto's transit that most will never use?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows perfectly well that that is not something we have ever supported. It's not what we're talking about. We're talking about investing in transit across the province. Whatever the revenue stream is and however we decide in our plan to put in place that revenue stream, we will do it in a fair way.

I want to be clear that the way I do politics, the way we do politics, is that we believe that government has to work for the whole province. The extension of his question is that somehow we come here with a narrow view of our responsibility and we only look to our own riding and we only think about the people we directly represent. Well, that may be the way he does politics, that may be the way their party does politics—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

I am going to mention the same thing once again, and that is that we have members who are provoking other members while the questions and answers are being put, and that's not helpful to this debate in this House. I'm going to ask you and remind the government side again—there are members who are using members' names on that side. I don't like it. It's got to stop. It elevates the temperature that it shouldn't be, so let's bring it down.

New question?

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday, the minister defended the closure of the acquired brain injury clinic at McMaster Children's Hospital. If the minister had bothered to talk to the pediatric ABI experts, she would know the importance of the clinic's cutting-edge, coordinated and integrated approach.

Dr. Robert Hollenberg, a highly regarded pediatric neurosurgeon who co-founded the ABI clinic, wrote to me. He said "an archaic model not supported by any research or accepted best practice guidelines." He further reported that the clinic had been praised by colleagues across Ontario and that similar programs are now being funded in Ottawa and Toronto.

Will the minister explain why she didn't do her homework?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that what I said yesterday is absolutely true. Children will still receive care for brain injuries at McMaster Children's Hospital. Instead of having to wait two weeks for an appointment—because that clinic only operated one day every two weeks—they will be able to get the care they need in a more timely way.

We are transforming health care. When services can be provided in the community instead of in the hospital, then that is often more appropriate care. Sometimes patients need care in hospital, and they'll get that care quickly. If services can be provided in the community, then they should receive those services in the community.

This is a reorganization, but I can assure you that children who need care because of an acquired brain injury will receive that care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, the clinic population has quadrupled in the last few years as a result of developing awareness of the prevalence of ABI and its potentially life-altering effects on young people, but now, following the acute stage, no comprehensive or multidisciplinary care will be available to these young people.

Dr. Hollenberg says, "This will not only overwhelm already busy primary care pediatricians and family physicians in the community, but will also frustrate and dismay the majority of the ABI population who truly need a comprehensive, multidisciplinary follow-up clinic staffed by professionals."

Is the minister going to continue to justify this cut, or will she finally do something about it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our commitment to people with acquired brain injuries, I think, speaks for itself. We have almost doubled our funding for services for people with acquired brain injuries. We're spending an additional \$36 million for people with acquired brain injuries. We've also more than doubled supportive housing supports for people with acquired brain injuries.

Speaker, this is often a lifelong disability, and it's really important to get people back into the community, living as full and normal and productive a life as they possibly can. That happens when they're in supportive housing.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

In Ontario, we are fortunate to have a wealth of biodiversity. This biodiversity, along with our natural heritage, is severely threatened by invasive species. As well, invasive species can cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars.

Once established, invasive species can be extremely difficult and costly to control and remediate. For example, the negative impact of invasive zebra mussels is estimated to cost \$75 million to \$91 million a year, and that's just one species.

I've read about Asian carp, and I have attended meetings in Chicago on Asian carp, and I'm very concerned about their spread in Ontario's Great Lakes. These fish can grow to 100 pounds, and are a threat to our \$2.2-billion recreational fishing industry and the commercial fisheries.

As well, every year, invasive plants cost the agriculture and forest industries in Canada about \$7.3 billion.

I know that stopping the spread of invasive species is a priority for your ministry, and I'm—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Oraziatti: I want to thank the hard-working member—he has more to add, obviously—from Ottawa—Orléans for this very important question.

Indeed, this legislation has broad support from many stakeholders, many of whom are here with us today. I appreciate the opportunity to inform members about this legislation and about what our government is proposing.

If passed, Ontario would become the first and only jurisdiction with stand-alone legislation in Canada. This is landmark legislation that would help by providing the powers to intervene earlier, leading to significantly reduced environmental and economic costs for Ontarians.

The new legislation would provide a stronger legislative framework with which to prevent, detect, control and manage invasive species that impact our natural environment, by including prohibitions on activities such as possessing and transporting invasives, enabling rapid response and ensuring modernized inspections.

Speaker, this is a risk-based approach that considers the full range of costs to the environment and the economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for letting us know about this important legislation. As I previously mentioned, invasive species are causing significant damage to the natural environment, and managing invasive species of Ontario is a complex and challenging task.

1120

I've heard from many of my constituents in Ottawa—Orléans about the damaging effects of the emerald ash borer. This insect is a serious threat to ash trees across Ontario. The beetle kills approximately 99% of the ash trees as it moves through an area, and has infested many trees in my riding and across the whole city. I'm glad your ministry has taken action on invasive species such as emerald ash borer.

I understand this proposed legislation will provide many tools to address these challenges in Ontario. Could the minister please tell the members of this House what other steps our government has taken to stop the spread of invasive species?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Again, I appreciate the question from the member from Ottawa—Orléans. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to outline the important measures we are taking to combat the spread of invasive species.

In 2011, our ministry established an invasive species research centre in Sault Ste. Marie, the first of its kind in the province, to help combat invasive species. We provided nearly \$10 million toward the establishment and operation of this centre, in partnership with the federal government. The invasive species centre would support the proposed legislation by working with our partners to help deliver research and technology that can help us better understand invasive species and develop the options to combat them, and also to develop education and outreach programs to help Ontarians be more aware of the risks of invasive species, and the part they can play in helping to defend our province.

In the province of BC, the mountain pine beetle has cost the BC government \$917 million. These are effects that we certainly do not want to see in this province, so we're going to work very hard to ensure that we do everything we can to combat invasive species in Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Premier.

The current NDP MPP from Niagara Falls demonstrated yesterday that he fully supports the government's agenda to introduce a provincial gas tax to fund GTA transit. This extra 10 cents per litre for gas is going to bankrupt families and businesses already struggling to keep up with rising costs. Today, it costs over \$1.32 for gas.

As of January, Niagara has one of the highest unemployment rates in this province. This government has failed Niagara. Their new MPP failed Niagara by propping up this government. Premier, why should the residents of Niagara pay for you to ride the subway?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I heard a lot of nonsense today and for the last week in this House about what is happening and what is actually occurring. Let me say this: There were over 200 pages in the last budget and economic update. Nowhere does it call for what they have just suggested.

If they read what's here, this is what they'll learn. They'll learn that we have cut personal income tax by \$355 per average family. We have actually cut \$8 billion, in tax relief for businesses. We've cut the small business tax from 5.5% to 4.5%. We're helping more businesses grow as a result of stimulus that we've been putting in.

The individuals across the way here—all they want to do is take away on the one hand, and the other one wants to just give it away. We have to take a balanced approach, Mr. Speaker. We cannot take extreme points of view in order to grow our economy. That is exactly what we'll do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'll tell you what's extreme: It's continuing to tax the Ontario people to the point where they can't afford the rent anymore.

The truth is that the gas tax, trades tax, Liberal health care premium tax—remember that one—they're just

euphemisms for Liberal scandal tax. The problem is this government's affinity for scandals.

The solution is not to gouge the taxpayer. You would have enough money for transit if your weak ministers didn't blow millions on Ornge, eHealth, gas plants or the Pan Am Games. The latest tax will cost an extra \$5 every time you fill up your tank.

Stop the taxes. Stop the overspending. Stop the scandal. Ontario deserves a responsible government just as much as Niagara deserves responsible representation.

Instead, Premier, do you think you could use the money from your next inevitable scandal to fund GTA transit instead of dipping into all our pockets again?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We'll continue to work on behalf of the good of Ontario, including all the infrastructure projects that we've been doing in Barrie. That individual across the way has not supported these very initiatives that are for the benefit of our competitiveness for the future.

In fact, the members opposite like to quote a very prominent economist. This is what he has to say about their plan: "It's extremely unlikely to produce any jobs. A few calculations should have made that evident," said Don Drummond.

This is what somebody else had to say about their job-killing plan: "Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak's latest economic offering is a simplistic, headline-hunting plan that's more concerned with austerity than job creation. And it ignores many of the most important drivers of economic growth." That was said by Michael Warren on January 14.

Better still, this is what an individual had to say about the Ontario Liberal plan. He said that things are looking much better in Ontario than they were and that the Ontario economy is starting to grow again—courtesy of Jim Flaherty—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd just like to remind my colleague that I beat—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

As a learning moment: Identify who you have the question for. Leave that for another time. Carry on.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Local schools are the heart of communities. Concerned parents from Niagara-on-the-Lake made passionate and informative presentations last night to keep their local school, Parliament Oak Public School, open. Parents in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the chamber of commerce and the Lord Mayor Dave Eke and council are all working to ensure that Parliament Oak Public School does not close its doors.

This school sits on a historic site, where the act against slavery was signed in 1793.

Will the Premier listen to local voices and ensure that Parliament Oak Public School stays open?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to congratulate the member for his recent election.

I think it would be useful to review the process around how school closures work. I think we do have to acknowledge that one of the problems that we have in Ontario today is that the birth rate has gone down. I'm sorry; I can't do anything about that as Minister of Education—

Interjection.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, the member from Cambridge is working on it.

The reality is that we do have, in many communities, more seats in our schools than we actually have children, or are ever likely to have.

But it's actually local school boards that are charged with addressing this particular issue of trying to figure out what schools need to stay open and where there are too many schools, and we can talk about that process more in the supplementary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you; yes, we will.

Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Students at Parliament Oak scored well above the provincial average for literacy and math. The school has attracted new families to Niagara-on-the-Lake. The accommodation review committee recommends that the school stay open, and \$1.6 million has been invested in renovating Parliament Oak since 2009.

I was with the parents in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and so was the Premier. Parents know that Parliament Oak Public School should be a model for schools for the Niagara region and the entire province.

Will the Premier assure parents, families and the community in Niagara-on-the-Lake that Parliament Oak Public School will not close?

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I was saying, this is actually a question for your local school board, because in fact, under Ontario's Education Act, it is the local school board that is charged with making the decision around what schools will be open, what schools will be closed, where the students will attend, and managing the whole issue around whether we have enough schools.

Certainly, if you want to intervene on behalf of your community, you can make an intervention with the local school board. But it is the trustees, who are locally elected, who are responsible for the accommodation review process, which you describe, which is ongoing.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Education. As you know, today is Pink Shirt Day, and it all started when a boy in grade 9 in Nova Scotia went to school wearing a pink shirt, and he was mercilessly bullied for looking gay.

Two thirds of kids who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered feel unsafe at school. Almost three quarters of kids report hearing homosexual slurs at school every day.

Minister, bullying in our schools and in our society is a real problem, with devastating results. I know that this

is an issue that all members of this House feel strongly about, so would the minister please tell us what she's doing to fight bullying in our schools?

1130

Hon. Liz Sandals: I thank the member for the question, and I'm delighted to be able to speak about this issue, because it's very important to me and, I think, important to members from all three parties.

Two high school students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, didn't stand by while that grade 9 student in Nova Scotia was bullied for wearing pink. They went out and they bought pink shirts too, and took a brave stand against bullying.

I'm proud to be a member of this Legislature, which passed aggressive anti-bullying legislation. I'm proud to see so many members from all parties wearing pink today in honour of those Nova Scotia students and showing their support for our anti-bullying initiatives, knowing that we all stand united when it comes to protecting our kids from bullying.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister. Those two grade 12 boys encouraged their classmates to wear pink too. They went home that night and emailed their friends, and word spread. What they essentially did was, they changed the culture at their school, and that is what we need to do, not just in our schools but in society at large. Would the minister tell us what we are doing outside of our schools to help counter bullying?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member is absolutely correct, and as a government, we took, actually, a precedential action for Canada. For the first time in Ontario and Canada, we recognized cyberbullying in our Accepting Schools Act. In fact, we included cyberbullying as part of the definition of bullying. That means that in Ontario schools, if a principal believes that actions that occurred online have a negative impact on the school climate, the principal has the authority to take action.

But that's not all we're doing. We've provided bullying prevention training for up to 25,000 teachers now, and close to 7,500 principals and vice-principals. We work with Kids Help Phone to provide a bullying prevention hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We're bringing together experts to advise on the best possible way to make sure that we continue with bullying prevention programs all across our schools, to keep our kids safe in their learning environment.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, back in June, I asked your ministry to give me a breakdown of the capital costs for the St. Joseph's forensic mental health care centre in St. Thomas. After a dizzying array of emails going back and forth between the Minister of Health and the Minister of Infrastructure, I could not get a straight answer.

Today, we learned that you shortchanged the hospital on \$3.9 million in annual operating costs and only au-

thorized the money at the last minute. This financial mismanagement is unsettling, but it's what we've come to expect from this government.

Minister, what other financial oversights have you made with this facility?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I am very, very happy that the member opposite has asked me this question.

Any member who has had a hospital built in their riding—and there are many of us who have had a new hospital built in their riding—will know that sometimes hospitals are built for future expansion. We have something called the post-construction operating program, that ramps up operating money as the hospital actually increases their capacity. This is the normal business of new hospitals opening. It applies as well to the hospital in St. Thomas.

I was very pleased that we were able to follow through on that commitment. We are not shortchanging any hospital anything. This is an additional \$3.9 million in funding so that more people can be cared for in that wonderful new facility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, this government has squandered billions on moving gas plants, billions in the Ornge fiasco, and we're not even close to uncovering how much the Pan Am Games are going to cost us. You yourself have presided over more scandals than any other minister. Your ministry couldn't give me a dollar amount for the capital costs—and apparently still can't—for the hospital that you built in St. Thomas, and you only authorized the \$3.9 million in annual operating costs at the last minute, after receiving a call from the London Free Press.

For a minister with so many scandals under her belt, who is making major financial decisions on an ad hoc basis, I'm concerned that you pose a risk to worthwhile projects like the St. Joseph's forensic mental health care centre. Minister, what other financial irregularities are you responsible for?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this is this member's way of saying "thank you" for building not just one new hospital but two new hospitals in his riding, so I am very pleased to say "you're welcome," and I'm glad that people in the St. Thomas area are getting access to better care.

You will know that the previous capacity of the old facility was 80 beds. The new building was built with expanded capacity for 89, and over time, as we always do, we will be ramping up funding. This was very much a normal part of business, and I was very happy to confirm that we are expanding to ramp up capacity at the hospital as it gets up and running.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. It has been more than three years since I introduced my private member's bill to protect employees' tips. Bill 49, as amended by committee following second

reading, is still languishing somewhere on a Liberal list. Meanwhile, thousands of hard-working Ontarians continue to wait for the protection which you yourself promised them.

Will this bill be called for third reading by this government?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for the question. I think the member opposite knows that we have worked very closely together on this very important bill. I've spoken in support of the bill, and, in fact, we have worked in quite a collaborative way in making sure that all the necessary amendments that need to be made to the bill in the committee get made. I want to thank the member for the hard work and collaboration on that bill.

When this bill comes for third reading—as the Speaker, you know, and the member opposite knows—that's not a decision that I as the Minister of Labour am responsible for. That is up to the three House leaders to decide what matters come to the floor of this House, and I will leave it in their good wisdom. I support the bill, and I urge all three House leaders to bring that bill to the floor of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: With all due respect, it is up to the Liberal government to call the bills that they say they support. The minister has repeatedly expressed his support for this bill, and he's done so again today. His party has made amendments to make the bill even more palatable to them. All of the amendments that were made during committee were made by the Liberal Party.

Workers across the province have waited long enough. If the bill is passed today, they will still have to wait until August 26 to finally stop some of their bosses from stealing their tips. When will this government call this bill?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I want to thank the member. We worked shoulder to shoulder on this very important bill. I have spoken in support of it, and we have made some necessary amendments. Again, it's up to the three House leaders to decide when they're going to bring the matter forward to the floor of this House, not me as a member.

I do want to talk about one important issue. I wish that that member from the NDP would have shown the same kind of passion for minimum wage, as well, because when it comes to an issue like minimum wage, he and his party have been absolutely silent.

For over a year we've been working on the issue of minimum wage, and I did not hear from that member, who claimed to speak on behalf of vulnerable workers, to talk about the issue of minimum wage—that we should increase minimum wage, that we should index it to the cost of living. I hope that this member will speak to his leader and his caucus and support Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I entertain a few points of order that I know are coming, I would like to introduce, in the Speaker's gallery today, the Ontario

council of universities' research group, who are here to observe. We welcome you and thank you for being here in the gallery.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park on a point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Because it is the day to wear pink, I would like to move a unanimous consent motion that all parties this afternoon could have up to five minutes to speak about the importance of this important day.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to do the unanimous consent first.

The member from Parkdale–High Park is seeking unanimous consent to this afternoon speak up to five minutes on pink day—or bullying. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Nepean–Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the comments by my colleague from the third party. I'm just rising to say that the Ontario PC Party also wanted to seek unanimous consent for the same five minutes, so I'm pleased that that—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, no. We had talked—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. I have to hear this, please, so can you please explain in more in depth?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate this, Speaker. We spoke beforehand. I appreciated the comments by the Minister of Education, as well as the comments from the MPP for Mississauga–Streetsville, but we did obviously want to have our opportunity to speak, and our education critic will address that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We don't need, then, unanimous consent. Therefore, that'll be taken care of and—I'm going to have to direct this because “this afternoon” is very broad. I'll ask the—

Hon. John Milloy: Same point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect we're going to be doing this following members' statements. Having said that, it would be the normal—so the government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I was simply going to say perhaps we could leave it up to the House leaders to determine when it happens. You've suggested after members' statements. I'll confer with fellow—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you and I'll leave that to the House leaders to determine that particular issue for this afternoon.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to correct my record. I noted that the Queensway Carleton

Hospital is located in the riding of the member for Nepean–Carleton. In fact, it is not. She lives in the riding where the hospital is located, and the hospital serves her riding.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome a couple of local politicians to the Legislature today. Dan McCaw is the reeve of Wollaston township, and Graham Blair is the deputy reeve of Wollaston township, from beautiful Coe Hill in North Hastings. Welcome to the Legislature, gentlemen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I just would like to take the opportunity to welcome Asma Mahmood, a strong community advocate in Mississauga and a champion of the arts. She's visiting Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I'm taking a chance by standing and not dismissing the place, but I'm going to remind you once more, please, if you know that they're coming and they're not here during introductions under both opportunities we are provided, say their names during that time anyway when you know they're coming later. It's just the way we've decided it's going to work, and it's just going to make it more difficult for us when we continue to do this.

I'm going to say that there are no deferred votes, so this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And no drive-by heckling.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As members will recall, earlier today, by unanimous consent, it was agreed that each party would be given five minutes to make a statement with respect to the anti-bullying day and Pink Shirt Day campaign. It was agreed that House leaders would discuss over the break. We have, Mr. Speaker, and we wish to do this five-minute unanimous consent presentation after members' statements—so just to give notice to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for that announcement. I'm sure all members heard that.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, my friend is not here yet, but I'd like to introduce to this House my great friend and colleague from Osgoode Hall Law School,

Jason Bogle. Please welcome him to the House. He's on his way.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce into the House Dave Meslin, a local leader who has led an initiative called the Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today in my capacity as both MPP for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and co-chair of the PC nuclear caucus, which I tag-team with the honourable member from Durham, John O'Toole.

I'm pleased that today Bruce Power, Canada's largest public-private partnership and a majority producer of our nuclear power, launched a new outreach effort, called Ontario's Nuclear Advantage, to remind Ontarians of the importance of nuclear. According to their new website, www.ontarionuclear.com, nuclear is critical to Ontario if our families and businesses want to enjoy stable and low prices, grow the economy and lead healthier lives.

Nuclear power provided almost 60% of Ontario's electricity in 2013. It did so safely, reliably and affordably. In fact, electricity from nuclear alone was as much as 30% cheaper than the average cost of electricity last year.

The industry supports employment of approximately 71,000 Canadians. According to a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the refurbishment of the Bruce units will inject \$3 billion into our economy and support 15,000 jobs a year overall. By 2040, the cumulative economic activity is estimated at \$70 billion.

Bruce Power is located in the neighbouring riding of my friend and colleague Lisa Thompson, Huron–Bruce, and provides 70% of the energy needed to phase out coal in Ontario, allowing Ontarians to benefit from cleaner air.

Both nuclear producers, Bruce Power and OPG provide well-paying jobs and deliver a baseload power supply. An affordable baseload supply of power is required if we are to sustain existing business and attract new business to the province. A clean, reliable and efficient supply of power from nuclear is also required if we are to provide an affordable energy to all households. This is a model that has served us very well over the last decade and will be essential moving forward.

I encourage all Ontarians to check out this new website and to provide all three political parties with their feedback in regard to the role they expect nuclear energy to play in our future.

BRANDT HUBER

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Today I have the privilege of recognizing Brandt Huber, an outstanding good Samaritan in my community of Windsor.

Brandt was walking to volunteer at a street mission on a cold wintry morning last month. He stopped at a busy

intersection in downtown Windsor and noticed, a few blocks ahead, someone lying on the sidewalk. It turns out it was a 13-year-old girl, a girl whose parents earlier had reported her missing.

When Brandt Huber found her, she was cold, wet, shivering and only semi-conscious. He took off his warm winter coat, wrapped it around her, and called 911. Police and paramedics were there within five minutes.

As he waited, he looked around. Cars were driving by and people were shovelling their sidewalks, yet before Brandt came along, no one had bothered to stop and help this girl.

Brandt Huber is a hero in my eyes, and he's been a community hero for a long time. He volunteers at Street Help, an organization dedicated to the homeless. They provide hot meals, warm clothes, backpacks, sleeping bags, shoes, socks, snacks—you name it.

Just ask my friend Christine Wilson, Street Help's administrator, about Brandt Huber. She describes him as someone who is selfless, always giving back to others. He's incredible, remarkable and, most of all, caring and genuine. I couldn't agree more with Christine Wilson.

Brandt Huber, you are a true local hero. If you didn't help that young girl when you did, who knows what the consequences would have been? As a member of this provincial Parliament, I say thank you, Brandt. Job well done.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Phil McNeely: On Saturday, February 22, the Global Community Alliance held their annual gala dinner in support of Black History Month in Ottawa. This annual event highlights the diversity within the Ottawa community and recognizes individuals, associations, businesses and organizations that have made a significant difference in our community.

The event featured a presentation by Canada Post of their stamps honouring Black History Month; a performance by a local musician, Angelique Francis; as well as a delegation from the Nigerian High Commission. The guest speaker was none other than the Minister of Labour, Yasir Naqvi.

A highlight of the gala is the community builder awards ceremony. I would like to mention those recipients, many of whom are from my riding, for their contributions to our community. Those who were recognized at the event were Oluwasegun Makinde, a sprinter who won the gold at the 2013 Jeux de la Francophonie and who went on to the 2012 summer Olympics; Marie-France Lalonde, a community and business leader working in health care and for seniors in Orléans; the Agoro family, for their work promoting peaceful conflict resolution; Mr. Charles Ofori-Attah; the Ottawa Police Service, for their community outreach efforts; the Ottawa Catholic School Board; Ms. Angelique Francis, for her impressive musical accomplishments; Mr. Merrick Palmer, a fabulous basketball coach; and Mrs. Ana Jimenez, for outstanding leadership at Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School.

I'd also like to thank the Global Community Alliance organizers, Yomi and Kelly Pratt, for another excellent and successful gala event.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, I'm proud to stand up in the House and give acknowledgement to a school in my riding of Huron-Bruce for a very special accomplishment. On January 23, Hillcrest Central School, which happens to be in my hometown of Teeswater, was declared a winner of the 2014 waste-free lunch challenge.

As part of Waste Reduction Week in Canada, elementary school children across the province committed to reducing, reusing and recycling for lunch. It was clear that these efforts made a significant contribution to reducing Ontario's waste in that particular week. The annual waste-free lunch challenge helps schools decrease the amount of garbage they generate, and educates students, teachers and parents about smart consumption and waste reduction.

In participating in the waste-free lunch challenge this year, schools measured how much waste they brought. The efforts of all these schools kept nearly 16,000 kilograms of lunch material from entering landfill over the one-week period. This amounts to the equivalent of 35 grand pianos.

I'm so proud to see this sort of activism and environmental concern in my riding of Huron-Bruce and across all of Ontario, and it's wonderful to see Hillcrest receive such significant recognition.

I'd like to offer my congratulations to the Teeswater community and extend my thanks and congratulations to the students, teachers, parents and volunteers who helped in this initiative.

AYSHI HASSAN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today, I would like to acknowledge the passing of a woman in the London community who devoted her life to promoting multiculturalism and welcoming immigrants to Canada.

Ayshi Hassan passed away peacefully on February 12 at the age of 92. Ayshi immigrated to Canada from Lebanon in 1939, when she was just 16 years old, and settled in London. She and her husband raised 11 children, and over the course of the 1950s and the 1960s, the Hassan home welcomed many family members emigrating from Lebanon to Canada.

Ayshi helped establish the first Arabic language program through the board of education, as well as the building of one of Ontario's oldest mosques on Oxford Street in London. Over the years, she worked at the London multicultural learner centre, helping with Canadians adjusting to life in Ontario, accessing social services and connecting with the community.

Ayshi was recognized for her work in community service, human rights advocacy and the promotion of a multicultural Canada, receiving many awards, including

the Canadian Council of Muslim Women's "Inspire" award and, more recently, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

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Ayshi Hassan was, by all accounts, a keystone of London's multicultural, Muslim and immigrant communities. She worked incredibly hard to assist newcomers to come to Canada, to advocate for those less fortunate and to promote peace.

I would like to extend my condolences to the Hassan family and all those affected by Ayshi's passing. It is a great loss to the London community, who I am sure will continue to celebrate and remember this woman's incredible contributions.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the Chinese New Year is the most significant holiday in Chinese culture. At 15 days long, it is also the longest holiday in China. Chinese New Year begins on the first day of the lunar calendar, known as the beginning of spring. It is a time to extend hospitality and generosity to everyone you know and everyone you don't.

On February 22, I attended the Mississauga Chinese Professionals and Businesses association banquet. The fire marshal insists that we pop balloons instead of setting off firecrackers to bring good luck into this new year of the horse.

The traditional lion dance was performed, followed by a sumptuous nine-course meal at Mississauga's Emerald Chinese Restaurant. Guests brought non-perishable items to donate to the local food bank. Along with Councillor Ron Starr and MP Bob Dechert, I joined in dressing up as one of the gods of fortune. All the proceeds of the lucky event were donated to the Yee Hong geriatric care foundation.

On the following evening, I attended another Chinese New Year banquet, this one hosted by Mr. Yuan Sheng OuYang, who is the owner of Yuan Ming supermarket. The dinner recognized the great work that Mr. OuYang's employees do at the supermarket and the contributions to the community of Mr. OuYang and his very generous family.

Speaker, Gong Hay Fat Choy.

ANDREA MCAULEY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm so proud today to stand and recognize excellence in educators as my sister, my wife and my daughter are all educators, and I'm so proud today to also recognize, from my riding, Andrea McAuley.

Andrea is the principal of R.H. Cornish Public School in Port Perry, and she has earned a national education award. She is one of 40 Canadian educators named by the Learning Partnership as Canada's outstanding principals for 2014.

The Learning Partnership is committed to success in publicly funded education through Canada-wide pro-

grams such as Take Our Kids to Work, the Entrepreneurial Adventure Program, and kindergarten orientation.

Principal Andrea McAuley was nominated for her outstanding leadership and planning skills as well as her initiative in encouraging connections between the school and the community. In fact, this morning, I watched as she was on television being congratulated and interviewed on CTV's Canada AM by Marcia MacMillan.

Her achievements have included kindergarten orientation programs at R.H. Cornish and also the establishment of an early years parent and family literacy hub at the school. As one of Canada's outstanding principals, Andrea McAuley joins a five-day executive leadership training program at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. Andrea will join Canada's National Academy of Principals.

Congratulations to Andrea, to R.H. Cornish Public School and the community, and, more importantly, to the Durham District School Board for their excellence in education today.

RANKED BALLOTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise in the House today to speak about ranked balloting in local elections. Today, I plan to introduce a bill, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, which comes out of a request from Toronto city council.

There has been a tremendous amount of activism on this issue, and I wanted to take this opportunity to recognize those individuals who joined me either in person or in spirit this morning at my news conference, including Dave Meslin.

My riding of Scarborough-Guildwood is a diverse one, as is the city of Toronto, and the way that the people of Toronto elect their representatives should reflect that. It's my hope that with the city, the province and the people working together, we can strengthen our local democracy. I also recognize the diversity of our entire province, and I hope this will spark debate in communities across Ontario.

Toronto may be the first city in Ontario to make this request and the first in Canada to elect its local representatives by a ranked ballot. It doesn't have to be the last one.

Today, I'm standing up for my community and for my city, which I'm not doing alone. I am looking forward to input and, hopefully, support from my colleagues from all sides of the House who do the same each and every day for their communities.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Rob Leone: I rise in this Legislature to talk about confidence in the Legislature. Every once in a while, from time to time, the opposition has an opportunity to pass judgment on this government. If I were a card-carrying member of the New Democratic Party, I would have been outraged. You see, they scorn the government

in the morning, and then in the afternoon prop them up. The NDP members wake up to protest and defeat, in solidarity with their brothers and sisters, only to stand down their arms later in the day. Months of tough talk and bluster, only to stand and support the government time and time again.

I'm from Waterloo region. I've heard time and time again from members of—from Kitchener–Waterloo, disappointed that the member has not voiced their concerns about this government. She supported them in the budget, and she's now crossing the floor without really crossing the floor. Now, I luckily am not a member of the New Democratic Party, so I know exactly the type of games they play. It's not new to me. Put union bosses before constituents. Her vote is supposed to be for the constituents. Instead, she gives it to the highest bidder. The people of Waterloo region need change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I waited to hear the entire statement, I am prompted to make a comment. That comment is, the tradition of this place, over the decades—and recently it's been deteriorating—is statements are usually designed for your own ridings or an opportunity to make comment about things that are happening. Debate is the opportunity to disagree with government. I'm going to ask all members—and I suggest that your colleagues who might not hear this directly read Hansard.

I'm asking for some understanding on what statements are supposed to be about. The tradition is to talk about the good things that are happening in your ridings, the proposals that you make, legislation that may impact, negatively or positively, in your own riding. Debate is where some of that other stuff can be done. I'm going to leave it at that and say that that's just my comment about how statements should be used.

I now ask for reports by committees. Reports by committees?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. Because there has been a specific request for the placement of the unanimous consent of the statements, instead of saying afternoon, the specific spot, we now have to have unanimous consent for the placement.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not ministerial statements. I'm sorry. I apologize. Let's get this right. We have unanimous consent on statements. I thought it was after ministerial statements; it's after members' statements. We now have time for the five-minute comments from each of the parties for pink day. So now we'll go to the Minister of Education for that unanimous consent.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Hon. Liz Sandals: It's lovely that we have all-party agreement on what we're doing here, for at least a few minutes.

It's my pleasure to speak today about Pink Shirt Day. As most of the people in this House know, Pink Shirt

Day began in Nova Scotia, when a grade 9 boy wore a pink shirt to school. He was then bullied by his school-mates for looking gay. But two high school students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, didn't stand by while that student was bullied. No. They bought pink shirts of their own. They contacted their friends, spread the word and encouraged classmates to wear pink as well. The following day, the school was a sea of pink. These students took a brave stand against bullying and should be examples for us all. They helped change the culture at this particular school, and in order to combat bullying in schools across this province, we need to shift the culture in all of our schools.

1520

I'm proud to say that with some of the actions this House has taken over the past few years, that culture shift is already happening. We passed the Accepting Schools Act, which ensures school boards take preventative measures against bullying and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for all. The same act recognizes cyber-bullying as part of the definition of "bullying," because we know that in today's technologically driven world, bullying does not stop at the end of the school day; it, unfortunately, carries on into the homes and recreation spaces of our students.

While we take important steps to adjust our laws to changing times, we also need to give our education professionals the tools they need to provide an accepting, safe and welcoming school culture. Just last week, Speaker, I attended the Beginning Teachers' Conference organized by the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, where this year's theme was "Bullying: Stepping Up to the Challenge." At this conference, I heard from so many new teachers who want to be empowered with strategies to address bullying in their schools. This includes many occasional teachers, who have the added challenge of working in a variety of schools, with a diversity of school cultures. We need to ensure these educators are empowered to intervene and stop bullying when they see it occurring in their schools.

These are the professionals who often see what we here in this place only read in reports or statistics—statistics like the fact that two thirds of kids who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered feel unsafe at school, and almost three quarters of kids report hearing homosexual slurs at school every day. So it is important that teachers, principals, support staff and students themselves feel just as empowered to stop bullying as David Shepherd and Travis Price.

Speaker, we've done a lot to help prevent bullying in Ontario schools already. We've provided bullying prevention training for up to 25,000 teachers and close to 7,500 principals and vice-principals. We're working with Kids Help Phone to provide a bullying hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and we're bringing together experts to advise on the best possible way to develop resources and practices to promote a positive school climate. But we know a lot more work needs to be done to create an environment where all our students feel

accepted. We're committed to ensuring that all of our students, regardless of race, culture, creed, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, feel welcome and respected in their individual schools.

I want to thank the members of this House who are displaying their support for Pink Shirt Day, like my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans who has the Most Spectacular Sweater of the Day Award, and I want to recognize all of our young people who have organized Pink Shirt Days in their schools across Ontario. We know that for our students to do well in school they must feel safe. By working together to prevent bullying, we can help all of our students reach their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. It's actually Nepean—Carleton. The member from Ottawa—Orléans is sitting diligently beside the Minister of Education in a very lively bright pink shirt, and I commend him for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's the sweater that threw me off. My apologies.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I thank the minister for her comments about how our assembly can make a difference by continuing to talk about anti-bullying and by continuing to allow our young people across the province to know that we're watching, that we're listening and that we are going to continue to use our voices, as loud as they can be from time to time, to bring this issue to the forefront so that they know that they are not alone, so that their parents can identify what the signals are and so that our teachers in our school system understand that we are with them as well.

I've had a number of occasions to speak about anti-bullying in the Legislature, so I'm pleased today that our education critic, Rob Leone, has asked me to step in as he is in committee. I want to thank my leader, Tim Hudak, for allowing me this opportunity to speak on behalf of our caucus.

Anti-bullying has become a very big issue for many members of this assembly. In fact, I recall my first statement in the 40th Parliament being about Jamie Hubley. I've spoken many times about how his death affected me personally, but also how it affected our community in Ottawa. I know that Jamie's name and his legacy live on in this assembly, and across the rest of Ontario and Canada even, because unfortunately his death highlighted something that was quite significant that was happening in our communities. So it is with great pleasure that I can continue to speak on that issue, although I have left the education portfolio.

I am a mother, as many people know here. I know that this assembly in the past couple of years has changed dramatically. We do have a lot more parents of young children here. In fact, a couple of our members have either had their wife give birth or they've started to see their children go off to school, and with that, I can speak from my own experience. You get the worries that your own child will be bullied. I actually had that experience, and I can say that the teachers in her school system were

so understanding that they not only made her feel better; they actually worked with the child who was perpetrating some of these acts. That's absolutely critical, so I want to congratulate at this time my daughter's own school and just say to her principal, Mr. Taniguchi, and her teachers, Madame DiStefano and Madame Marinelli, and all of the teachers at her school, how welcome I felt going through those experiences myself.

I'd also like to say that there are a number of people out in our communities who are trying to raise this message, and they're not the government; they are regular people. They are people who want to help little kids. We have a lady in Nepean whose name is Maria Hawkins, and she's got a great, big, beautiful voice, and she goes in and she sings. She'll spend a day with the kids and they feel really good. They understand that anti-bullying is also about school spirit, and I think that's pretty great.

I've had the opportunity, as I know the minister has had, and I know my friends in the third party will say this—when we're MPPs, we have the opportunity to travel Ontario, and you get to meet some pretty incredible people. I think I'd be remiss not to mention them today, as I have in the past, and their efforts to keep their children and other children safe from bullying.

I think about my friend—and I know my friend from Ottawa Centre will say this as well—Stuntman Stu. He was bullied as a kid and now he is on Majic 100.3 in Ottawa. He is the Sens announcer. That's what he gets to do for a living in the evening: He gets to announce Senators hockey games. And every celebrity he meets, whether they come into the studio or it's a hockey player, he gets them to wear a bracelet that says "No More Bullies" on it. We have that bracelet, and I get a kick out of Stuntman Stu, because he uses his professional experience to actually reach out to parents and kids and make them feel better and make them feel that they're not alone. Pretty good stuff, eh?

I'd like to also talk about Karen Sebben and Corrina Morrison, and Jeff and Julie Stauffer. These are parents who have seen this first-hand and they've dedicated numerous hours of their life to give back, to bring that anti-bullying message.

But one of the things I'm most excited about isn't happening at this chamber; it's actually happening at the federal chamber. In my private life, I'm actually married to a man named Joe Varner. He's the deputy chief of staff and senior policy adviser to Canada's justice minister. Over the period of the summer, they came to me to tell me they were going to be working on anti-bullying legislation and cyber-bullying because Minister MacKay's home province of Nova Scotia had dealt with the death of Rehtaeh Parsons and he decided he wanted to do something about it. So over the summer, I had the opportunity to sort of share some of my experiences with them, and they've got legislation now in front of the House of Commons. This is a national problem, and finally we're having a national discussion about it. I'm very excited about that because we need to make sure

that our children across Ontario know that there's hope, but we also have to ensure that people understand that when they bully, and particularly when they cyber-bully, they're not supposed to do that and it does come with consequences.

I want to say thank you to all members of the assembly for agreeing to unanimous consent. I was really proud to be able to take part in this and I feel absolutely privileged. Thank you all very, very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure and it's a privilege to stand in this House and speak on behalf of New Democrats and our leader, Andrea Horwath, on this issue.

Day of Pink: I just want to bring it back a little bit in discussion. I mean, this child was bullied because they thought he was gay. This is about the bullying of LGBT students.

1530

First of all, kudos; I don't want to repeat what the Minister of Education has said about the history of the day so much, but to talk about where the day has progressed and what we're looking at now.

I was privileged to be a part of the Accepting Schools Act committee that travelled around the province, but we're still seeing in this province the problems that children are having starting gay-straight alliances in their schools. It's not seamless. There's work to be done, and that work is being done by our children right now.

So I would say to my friend the Minister of Education that there still should be some focus on what's happening in schools around bullying of LGBT students, because it's still going on, and gay-straight alliances are not being allowed in all schools. That needs to happen. That's number one.

Number two: I think this province truly is a beacon to the world in its legislation in some ways, and I was proud to be a part of Toby's law. That was a tri-party bill—I tabled it many times to get to that point—ultimately that added gender identity and gender expression to the Ontario Human Rights Code. Again, that has made a difference in the lives of trans students, who are the most bullied and the most at risk. In fact, trans people generally have a 50% attempted suicide rate and a 50% poverty rate.

But—again, there's a but, Mr. Speaker—we saw just recently Avery Edison, who is a British comic who came over to Canada. She had a visa irregularity—this was not a criminal offence—and she was imprisoned in a men's prison, after being subjected to a really humiliating body search. This cannot be allowed.

She was then, after a Twitter storm in her defence—this is a woman of some fame in Great Britain—transferred to Vanier women's prison, to solitary again. If our only answer in this province is to put trans women and trans men in solitary for visa offences, we've got a problem. People are not putting into practice what is the spirit of the law that sets us apart as a province. We need to do this.

Again, I would say to my friend the minister of corrections that we need a policy that goes out to correctional facilities—that goes out to all of our facilities—so that people know what they're expected to do. It's an educational process, because we know now that it's about education.

I just have a few moments left, but I want to set the context even broader. When we look at bullying, the major problem of bullying of LGBT people in this world is by governments. I would be remiss if I did not call attention to the fact that 70 countries in the world still have anti-LGBT laws. In seven of those, homosexuality, transsexuality, as well, and bisexuality are punishable by death.

Just today on Facebook, there was a number of posts about the situation in Uganda. I think we, with one voice, would want to decry that reality. There's much, much work to be done. The major source of bullying in this world of young people who are gay, or queer in any way, is by their own governments. That's something we have to stand up to as Canadians, as Ontarians, and make sure everyone knows.

The clip that was on Facebook that was horrendous was the front page of a newspaper in Uganda that listed 200 gay individuals, and pretty well invited violence against them. This cannot be allowed to go on. We would call upon our federal government, certainly, to stand up and to start talking about human rights, because LGBT rights are human rights.

By the way, our own press is not immune to that, either. We have to make very sure that Toby's law—just like sexual preference, which was the last time the Human Rights Code was updated, and that was 25 years ago—is actually enforced, so that we don't use transphobia to attack people. It has been done in our own press as well; I won't go into details there.

Suffice it to say that, yes, we're proud. I thank everyone who wore pink. I thank all for giving and granting this unanimous consent, so that we could all speak about the Day of Pink, because that's important, that we keep this democratic. This isn't and shouldn't be partisan. We are speaking about bullying. We need to stop bullying.

A final shout-out to a very good friend: Jeremy Dias of Jer's Vision, who's done so much on this, and so much good work across the province and across Canada. He's in British Columbia now for their Day of Pink today. Hey, Jeremy, way to go.

To all of the kids in all of the GSAs and all of those who've worked so hard to get us where we are, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, I thank all members for their comments.

I stand from time to time to offer my own personal comment, and that is, I apologize for my confusion in the House for not following through what I should have done. I had mistaken members' statements and ministerial statements. That's what I did, and I apologize for that. I thank the Clerk's office for putting me right back on track.

I apologize to the member from Nepean–Carleton because the member from Ottawa–Orléans threw me off with that wonderful sweater. I couldn't think straight.

Again, I offer my subtle apologies. I will be less confused in the future, so thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL INC. ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr27, An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

TORONTO RANKED BALLOT ELECTIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR UN MODE DE SCRUTIN PRÉFÉRENTIEL POUR TORONTO

Ms. Hunter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 to allow the City of Toronto to pass a ranked ballot by-law for city council elections / Projet de loi 166, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto afin de permettre à la cité de Toronto d'adopter un règlement municipal sur le scrutin préférentiel pour les élections au conseil municipal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My bill, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, would enable the city of Toronto, working with the province and after public consultation, to introduce a ranked ballot for local elections by 2018.

I've spoken broadly to this earlier, but it's my hope that the city, the province and the people, working together, we can together strengthen our local democracy. I'm looking forward to input and hopefully support from my colleagues from all sides of the House.

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LES ESPÈCES ENVAHISSANTES

Mr. Oraziotti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 167, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Speaker. I'll wait until ministerial statements.

1540

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INVASIVE SPECIES

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to introduce this legislation today, and with the support of all members, hopefully this will pass expediently.

Invasive species are a serious threat to our economy and to our environment. They cost Ontario's economy tens of millions of dollars each year. Once established, invasive species can be extremely difficult and costly to control. The impacts on our natural environment can be often extensive and irreversible. These species put resource-based jobs at risk, like the \$11.9-billion forestry industry, which supports more than 55,000 jobs in over 220 communities across northern Ontario, and the commercially sensitive areas around fishing, which are extremely important that we protect. This economy contributes approximately \$234 million to Ontario's economy annually.

With the Great Lakes on our borders and the high levels of trade and travel, Ontario is particularly at risk from invasive species. Sometimes, they're spread unintentionally, like boaters who unknowingly transfer zebra mussels attached to their boat from one body of water to another. But they may also be introduced into Ontario knowingly, whether it's purchasing invasive plants for gardening, dumping aquarium plants into local waterways or moving contaminated firewood. Once invasive species are introduced into the wild with no natural predators, they're able to spread quickly, reproduce rapidly, and have few competitors for food and water in their new environments.

According to a 2010 report on the state of Ontario's biodiversity, invasive species are the second-greatest threat to species at risk in Ontario and they are a leading cause of extinction of species globally. Take the zebra mussel, for example, a species I'm sure many Ontarians are familiar with. Each year, Ontario spends between \$75 million and \$91 million just to manage this single species, and these invasive mussels have virtually eliminated all native mussels from Lake Erie. This is in addition to the negative impacts that this species has on Ontarians' enjoyment of our lakes and rivers.

Another example is the mountain pine beetle, which the people of British Columbia have had to deal with for

a number of years now. Since 2001, it has destroyed millions of hectares of pine trees in BC, and with it, the government has spent \$917 million in an attempt to control this invasive. There is a very real threat and concern that if it arrives in Ontario, it will impact all species of pine and create significant negative impacts on our forestry industry.

That's why I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce this proposed legislation that would address the serious threat to Ontario's natural environment. The proposed Invasive Species Act would provide a strong legislative framework to better prevent, detect, rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species in the province. This landmark legislation would help by providing the powers to intervene earlier, so invasives do not become established and lead to significant social, environmental and economic costs for Ontarians.

Prevention is the key to stopping invasive species. In some cases, control programs cost 24 times more than prevention programs. Currently, Ontario relies on a patchwork of more than 20 federal and provincial acts, none of which were designed to deal with invasive species. This has left legislative gaps that our proposed legislation would help to address. Addressing these gaps would enable the government to take a more strategic and preventable approach to invasive species management. It would give us the tools to prohibit activities such as possessing and transporting certain types of invasive species, enable rapid response actions to address urgent threats, and help ensure compliance through modernized inspection and enforcement measures.

If the proposed legislation is passed, Ontario will be the first jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation. Managing invasive species has always been a collaborative effort across all levels of government as well as with industry, environmental groups and the public. Ontario will continue to collaborate with all of those involved in invasive species management, including municipalities and the federal government, which have an important national role to play in invasive species management.

Our government has many enduring partnerships in this area. As a member of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, Ontario is working with the Great Lakes states and the US and federal governments to prevent aquatic invasive species, such as Asian carp, from entering the Great Lakes.

For more than two decades, we have been working with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters to deliver the Invasive Species Awareness Program.

More recently, we supported the creation of the Invasive Species Centre, in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, to collaborate on research, strategic planning, communications and outreach, as well as response actions, mitigation and rehabilitation activities. To date, Ontario has provided approximately \$9 million toward the establishment and operation of this centre.

Partnerships such as these are helping to protect our recreational fishing industry, an industry that contributes

about \$2.2 billion to Ontario's economy and is a notable contributor to the Ontario tourism industry.

This landmark legislation would, if passed, expand the use of strategic partnerships such as these, and build on the work MNR has been doing with stakeholders for many years. Our 2012 Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan acknowledges the critical roles that partners and stakeholders play in prevention and management of invasive species. It was followed by a discussion paper we issued last summer, and we welcome comments from the public and stakeholders on the proposed legislation.

I can tell you that a broad range of stakeholders have expressed support for stronger action to address invasive species. All of them—municipalities, conservation groups and industry—recognize the need for stronger action in managing this threat to our province's economy and our natural environment.

Speaker, invasive species can spread quickly and impact all Ontarians, including landowners, anglers, industry and businesses. With the introduction of the proposed Invasive Species Act, Ontario is taking a leadership role with significant and necessary action to address social, ecological and economic threats posed by invasive species to our great province.

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

Hon. Michael Chan: Today marks a significant milestone in government support for the arts in Ontario. It was 50 years ago that the government established the Ontario Arts Council. The vision and mission of the Ontario Arts Council was "to foster the creation and protection of art for the benefit of all Ontarians." Speaker, that was five decades ago. Today, this vital mission remains strong.

The creation of the Ontario Arts Council marked a bold beginning. It established a system that built the most robust arts infrastructure in Canada, enabling Ontario to earn the reputation as an artistically rich and creative province, thanks to our innovative artists and arts organizations. We are blessed that generations of musicians, dancers, writers, painters and visionaries generously share their great gifts within our borders and beyond.

Today, Ontario is proudly home to one of the best culture sectors in the world. This success is in large part because of the critical support received by the Ontario Arts Council over the last 50 years.

Mr. Speaker, here in Ontario, creativity and culture is a natural resource. Found in every corner of our big province, it thrives in our cities, in our centres and in our communities. It unites us and defines us as a people and as a society.

As the arts in Ontario enrich our quality of life and strengthen our economy, our government values this significant contribution. This is why we, as a government, have been strong supporters of our arts and our artists. Since 2003, the government has invested over \$5.8 billion in culture. This includes close to \$600 million to the Ontario Arts Council. In 2012 and 2013, OAC has

supported over 2,500 professional artists and arts organizations in 232 communities across our province, offering an incredible, incredible return on our investment.

Today, Ontario's culture sector is one of the fastest-growing sectors, contributing over \$23 billion annually to Ontario's economy and generating 300,000 jobs.

1550

In times of economic uncertainty, many governments sacrifice culture as the first casualty of fiscal constraint. I am proud that our government has continuously partnered with our artists and our arts organizations to build an innovative and competitive economy, to support a healthy and vibrant society, and to ensure a strong foundation for economic growth and prosperity.

The work of the Ontario Arts Council has been key to this success over the past 50 years, and will continue to be in the next many more years to come. As we seek to foster future growth, as we nurture new and emerging talent, and as we strengthen our creative infrastructure, we create jobs, promote prosperity and ensure that Ontario's talent stays in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize our artists and arts organizations that join us here today to mark this golden anniversary, and to thank them for their contributions, for their vision, for their passion, and for their spirit that entertains and enlightens audiences and inspires all of us to participate in the extraordinary cultural life found in all of our communities.

I would also like to congratulate the Ontario Arts Council on its 50th year of strengthening the arts in Ontario and helping to make our province the true cultural capital that it is today.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our government is working hard every day to make sure that workers go home safe to their family and loved ones at the end of their shift. We have introduced new standards for those working at heights, as well as basic health and safety awareness training.

But one of the most common injuries is work-related repetitive strain injury, also known as RSIs. These injuries mainly affect muscles, nerves and tendons, and they can develop as a result of repetitive work, including typing, forceful exertions like heavy lifting and carrying, or when our limbs are put in awkward positions for long periods of time.

RSIs may not be life-threatening, but they can be life-changing. Whether it is a store clerk stocking shelves at the local department store in Windsor or an office worker typing at a computer in Ottawa, RSIs can affect any worker, anywhere, at any time. The impact of these injuries can be debilitating, with some suffering constant pain that makes it hard to get out of bed.

Speaker, nearly 40% of injuries that require time off work in Ontario are a result of musculoskeletal disorders, or MSDs, an umbrella term that includes RSIs. In 2012 alone, MSDs amounted to 469,000 working days lost and

more than \$68 million in medical and other claims in Ontario. And the thing about these injuries is that they often result from jobs that people don't think are dangerous.

Today, we mark Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day to promote avoidance of these injuries to improve the well-being of workers across the province. That's why our government has conducted workplace inspection blitzes that target MSD hazards in a variety of sectors.

And we are making progress. In 2006, our government launched a Pains and Strains Campaign to increase awareness of ergonomic-related injuries. Since then, we have created a wealth of resources, increased the number of ergonomists at the Ministry of Labour, and enhanced training for inspectors on MSD prevention.

From 2006 to 2012, the number of injuries that resulted in people missing work because of MSDs dropped 41%. The direct cost associated with this has decreased 47%, and the number of working days lost due to MSDs has declined 61%. This is good news for workers, for employers and for workplaces all across Ontario.

But we can do more. As long as one worker can't go to work, much less get out of bed in the morning, because of a painful injury, we all must do more. We encourage everyone to go to the Ministry of Labour's website at Ontario.ca/labour. We have a wealth of resources from videos to fact sheets, interactive tools, podcasts and posters. It contains dozens of sector-specific examples about how these hazards can be eliminated or controlled, in 14 different languages, in addition to English and French: information that can help you prevent MSDs for yourself or, if you are an employer, for your employees.

Speaker, our government is committed to making sure workers in Ontario are protected from injuries on the job, but it is a partnership, and it starts in the workplace. So today, let's redouble our efforts to ensure workplaces address these hazards, keep workers safe and eliminate repetitive strain hazards that could cause years of pain—because we have the ability to stop it before it happens, because prevention starts here with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Toby Barrett: I commend this government for taking invasive species seriously enough and taking MNR seriously enough to introduce this legislation today. The goals are admirable: to support the prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species. By way of example, in 2011, I submitted a resolution calling for the evisceration—the gutting—of Asian carp brought into Ontario for food. MNR made the same call in 2013. However, the clock is ticking.

While on vacation in Louisiana, I testified at the Army Corps of Engineers on the Chicago area waterways report. I testified that it really makes no difference if a

truck full of live Asian carp gets into a collision in Ontario or Ohio or Michigan, and the fish escape into a ditch that flows into a Lake Erie tributary. These invasive species don't abide by borders. My question, Minister: Are you talking to your American counterparts about interstate transportation of these carp? Will you commit to work directly with Great Lakes and other jurisdictions with respect to exotics?

Mother Nature is complex, and so is our political and economic relationship with the United States. Have you talked to the tow tug and the barge industry with respect to the Chicago canal? Will this legislation dovetail with any proposed federal regulations, whether they be Canadian or American?

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of Tim Hudak, our leader, and the PC caucus in recognizing Ontario Arts Council day at Queen's Park and on this, their 50th anniversary. This day provides us with a great chance to recognize and celebrate the importance of the arts in Ontario.

Most people don't understand the job creation and economic stimulus that the arts add to our province. It's amazing to see that more than 252,000 Ontarians work in the cultural sector, which represents 4.1% of the provincial workforce. The arts are important for the economy, for tourism and culture, especially in rural areas like my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. They have many small businesses, including amazing individuals who create and produce various forms of art within the community. The most recent statistics actually indicate that the culture sector generates \$23 billion annually to the provincial economy.

I know that many of you had meetings today—and the long list of organizations in our ridings that have received funding, everything from theatres to music festivals to kids' shows to sponsoring exhibitions just to try and promote the arts in our communities.

The Ontario Arts Council plays a vital role in development of arts in Ontario, and I'm happy that they now have a strategic plan in place to ensure the future development of the arts, considering that art and culture are certainly large pillars in our province.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about repetitive strain injury day. This is an important day for workers and employers all across Ontario. It's a day meant to raise these issues amongst workers and employers.

Repetitive strain injury is an umbrella term that is used to describe a series of disorders that affect tendons, muscles, nerves and joints. They are often caused by work-related activities that are frequent and repetitive, or ones with awkward postures, fixed or constrained body positions, repetition of movements on a continual basis,

forced concentration on small parts of the body such as the hands or wrists, or any kind of work that does not allow enough rest between movements.

1600

When a worker suffers from workplace-related injuries, it inhibits their ability to successfully do their job and ultimately impacts Ontario's economy. It's important to dedicate a day to increase awareness, further educate, and help prevent these types of injuries, and I'm pleased to rise and speak on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, and on behalf of the workers in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

On behalf of our party, we remain committed to standing up for Ontario workers and their safety in the workplace, and wish everyone a safe and informative repetitive strain injury day.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to stand in this place and speak on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, in response to the government's proposal to introduce legislation to take action against invasive species. Invasive species have long been a threat to our province, and as our world becomes more connected and our climate changes, they're becoming an even larger threat.

Zebra mussels and the emerald ash borer are examples of species that we are currently battling with. The Asian carp and the mountain pine beetle could soon join the fray. We have seen the incredible damage that these species have caused in other jurisdictions.

The Invasive Species Act could certainly be a step in the right direction. It could support the prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province—noble goals. We all agree that more needs to be done. The main challenge is: How? The Ministry of Natural Resources' budget has basically flatlined for the last two decades. If you compare it to spending in other parts of the government, it has fallen drastically behind. On the ground, where it matters, the ministry is a mere shadow of its former self. There are not enough people on the ground to do their current jobs.

We look forward to debating this legislation and support its intent. It will be our main goal to ensure that its intended goals can actually be achieved.

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

Mr. Paul Miller: For over 50 years, the Ontario Arts Council has provided funding for Ontario arts, community and cultural events. Last year, they provided over \$50 million in total grants. Included in this are events such as the Hamilton Fringe Festival and organizations like the Hamilton Children's Choir. I've seen the positive impact that this funding has provided in our ridings.

The arts play a pivotal role in all our communities, from large exhibits in our cities to theatre productions in our small towns. Not only do these grants help to tell our

history, but they keep our cultural fabric alive. They also provide a venue for young artists of all disciplines to fine-tune their skills for future endeavours.

With changing demographics and diminishing arts education in schools, however, there is an increasing need to promote the arts to our youth. I just spoke to Katherine Carleton, Yvonne Felix and Jeremy Freiburger, who emphasized the need to continue funding the arts in Ontario. Not only do the arts provide a cultural cornerstone to our communities, but they provide measurable economic impacts.

I hope that all members will continue to support the arts in Ontario, and I invite everyone to attend the Ontario Arts Council reception this evening.

Speaker, I can't emphasize enough that we have to reintroduce programs of art in our schools. It's very important.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise in recognition of the 14th annual international repetitive strain injury day. Repetitive strain injuries, or RSIs, are an umbrella term for a number of overuse injuries that can occur from work.

RSIs affect muscles, tendons and nerves of the neck, upper and lower back, chest, shoulders, arms and hands. Typically arising as aches and pains, these injuries can progress to become crippling disorders that prevent sufferers from working and from leading normal lives.

The work-relatedness of RSI is under attack. Some 300 years after Bernardino Ramazzini, the father of occupational medicine, first wrote about RSIs, the WSIB quietly commissioned a report on permanent impairment advisory services from a US firm, Brigham and Associates. Without announcement or public consultation, the report was sought, contracted, written and submitted back to the WSIB within a short three-month time frame.

As unbelievable as it sounds, the Brigham report states that RSI diagnoses are not appropriate and may actually lead the patient to believe that he or she has a condition that is something more than the ordinary aches and pains of life. Not only will this be disastrous for those workers suffering from RSI, but it will lead to more injuries, as there will be no need or attention paid to prevent injuries that are not deemed to be related to work.

This is a disturbing trend that we saw last year with low back pain. In 2012, Ontario researchers criticized a systematic review that called into question the idea that occupational physical injuries can cause low back pain. Specifically, the authors did a systematic review of their own other eight systematic reviews to get these findings. Injured workers can tell you that work causes low back pain, just like they can tell us and the WSIB that RSIs from work cause debilitating, lifelong injuries—if only they were asked.

Instead, injured workers once again find themselves and their allies having to defend and critically analyze the scientific reports that WSIB obtains to inform WSIB policy. It is important to critically analyze and consider

sweeping conclusions and to study the validity of the scientific basis of such claims before they form the basis of WSIB policy.

I want to thank all those who bring attention to repetitive strain injury and those who suffer from repetitive strain injury, and certainly extend support from our caucus to injured workers across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

It is now time for petitions because the member for Durham has one.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's so surprising that I have one. This petition here is from my riding and it is very, very sensitive:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" to get back to work;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices" and regulations.

I'm pleased to sign this and support this on behalf of my constituents and seniors in Durham, and present it to Aqil.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province

due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the north-west; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this, will affix my signature and will give it to the page.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Grant Crack: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned residents of Edwards, Carlsbad Springs, and Vars, of the city of Ottawa, in the province of Ontario, draw to the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario the following:

"The petitioners have serious grievances with the proposed development by Taggart Miller Environmental Services (TMES), proponents of the Capital Region Resource Recovery Centre (CRRRC) and waste disposal/landfill facility, which is to be situated in Carlsbad Springs just south of Highway 417, east of Boundary Road, west of Frontier Road, and north of Devine Road in the city of Ottawa. As is currently evidenced at other waste disposal/landfill sites, they are unsafe and dangerous and pose a serious threat to the environment and to the people in the surrounding area. No one will or can guarantee that there is no risk or even limited risk. Landfills will eventually leak and toxic liquid landfill leachate could seep into the high water table and Shaw's Creek, contaminating wells and water supplies for the surrounding residents, farmlands and commercial industries, jeopardizing the natural environment and seriously jeopardizing our health and livelihoods.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and the Ministry of the Environment, to reject the proposed CRRRC waste disposal facility by Taggart Miller Environmental Services, on the proposed site and surrounding rural, agricultural, commercial and residential properties in Carlsbad Springs, within the city of Ottawa, in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature and agree with the petition and send it with Emily.

1630

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

"Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I concur with this petition, and I'll affix my name to it.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

"Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board;

"Whereas this has created an unfair two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario, where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

"Whereas removing these simple exemption loopholes in the RTA law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006."

It is my pleasure to affix my signature to this and give this to page Owen.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to

divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

I approve of this petition. I affix my signature and hand it over to page Ibrahim.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship’s eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship’s fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

I sign this and give it to page Shannon.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to introduce this petition in support of members of my riding who signed the petition in support of Geri Sutts, who suffers from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

“Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown

to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and send it to the Clerks’ desk through page Owen.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition from my constituency of Ajax-Pickering to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant’s) outfall; and

“Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

“Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

“Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

“Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

“Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP.”

I attach my name to it and pass it to Samer.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

“Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise

funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

“Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

“Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians.”

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Jessie.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

“Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

“Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

“Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation.”

I support this and will give it to page Owen to deliver.

1620

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: The petition here, addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, reads as follows:

“Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone’s responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

“Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

With that, Speaker, I send this to you by page Anne.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

“Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I will affix my signature to this petition and send it to the table with Ibrahim.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions has ended.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that many Ontario families are struggling with the high cost of living, unaffordable hydro rates, and already pay enough taxes; and

That taxpayers should not be forced to dig into their pockets any further to pay for the Liberal government’s waste and scandals;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario agrees that the Liberal government should not introduce or raise any taxes, including, but not limited to, the gas tax, payroll taxes and corporate taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Fedeli has moved opposition day number 1.

Mr. Fedeli?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, this morning, 600,000 men and women woke up in Ontario without a job. Heinz, Kellogg's, Caterpillar: They're all companies that recently announced they are shutting their Ontario operations and heading for greener pastures. They're still making ketchup. They're still making cereal. They're still making earth-moving equipment. They are just not making them in Ontario any longer.

With Ontario boasting the highest energy prices in North America, the highest payroll taxes in Canada, 86 consecutive months with unemployment higher than the national average, and a government about to raise the gas taxes and the corporate taxes, is it any wonder these companies are abandoning Ontario in record numbers? In addition, other companies are bypassing Ontario as they search for a place to set up shop.

Whatever happened to this once-powerful province, the envy of all of Canada? Ontario, once the engine of Confederation, has become a have-not province, relying on equalization payments from the federal government. We had a low debt-to-GDP. We had low unemployment. We had cheap hydro. We had less red tape. But look at what's happened to us over the last decade.

Hydro rates have tripled, and the government has recently told us they will increase almost 50% more in the next few years. Corporate taxes, which were scheduled to fall from 11.5% to 10% in the 2012 budget, were left at that high level, as part of the Liberal deal with their NDP partners to win their support. As a result, Ontario businesses will be paying the highest corporate taxes amongst the large provinces in Canada.

The increasing burden of red tape, which costs the Ontario economy billions of dollars—in fact, costs Canadians \$31 billion annually—has prevented Ontario businesses from reinvesting into their companies and has hurt non-profits and social organizations, as we heard in the pre-budget consultation.

For the first month of 2014, PC caucus MPPs here toured Ontario in a series of pre-budget consultations and finance round tables. They met with business groups, social groups and individuals. After visiting almost 30 cities from Sarnia to Kenora, from Timmins to Cornwall, a definite theme arose: expensive energy, high taxes and crushing red tape. For those Ontarians who pleaded with us at the pre-budget consultations to deal with these urgent issues, you have been heard by the Ontario PC caucus. We are dealing with those here today. That's what this opposition day motion is all about. It's time to take a stand for Ontario families and businesses and just say no to new taxes.

Unfortunately, the best predictor of this government's actions is past behaviour. So today, we will indeed find

out if the Liberals and the NDP intend, again, to raise your taxes. I think we know which way the government is going, so let's just have a look again at some of the past behaviour. The most recent and significant tax hike is the one I mentioned, where the budget was scheduled to drop taxes from 11.5% to 10%. They left them at that high rate and now are about to, in the new taxes proposed by the Premier and her Liberal Party, raise corporate taxes to 12%.

Let's look at what happened in 2003. They repealed the corporate income tax cuts, cancelled scheduled personal income tax cuts and raised tobacco taxes. In 2004, the favourite of Ontario, of course, was the Ontario health premium, along with OHIP delisting eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services. In the 2009 budget, we saw the harmonized sales tax, which this government sold to us as the creator of 600,000 jobs in Ontario. Sadly, we haven't seen them. It's 600,000 who are now unemployed in Ontario.

The waste diversion eco-taxes, as our members have talked about frequently, with the Ontario tire stewardship fees, the electronics recycling fees—when you go to a consumer store now and buy a TV on sale for \$119, and you head up to the counter and see that there's another \$39 in new taxes, it's no wonder they're piled up at the registers. We've got other taxes, miscellaneous taxes, in addition to tripling our hydro rates: vehicle and carrier registrations, driver's licence fees, estate- and court-related fees, camping unit fees.

But sadly, and I won't call it my favourite—it's just the classic example of what this government is all about and why and how they shake consumer and business confidence—is what this Liberal government did to raise taxes in their 2007 budget. They made a sudden change to the tax structure for diamond mines, very close to the start of production at the Victor mine, Ontario's first, and now still our only, diamond mine. At the time of the budget announcement, De Beers had already invested approximately \$1 billion into the construction of the Victor project, which was scheduled to start in 2008. The government introduced a diamond royalty system, but they said to De Beers, "Don't worry, we're going to charge this brand new tax to all diamond companies in Ontario." Of course, as I said, De Beers was the only one, and now is still the only one. When you wonder why the companies up in the ring of north have not developed the chromite mines, I can tell you plain and simply that I have met with every one of them, and the three principal mines are all very concerned that the government will pull another tax stunt and they'll have a chromite tax as soon as they've spent a couple of billion dollars.

So what has this all done? It's doubled our debt, it's tripled our hydro rates and it is chasing businesses out of Ontario on almost a daily basis. Quite frankly, it's not working. The answer to Ontario's deep problems isn't to dig the hole deeper and dig into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, increasing their taxes. It's our leader's Million Jobs Act, which will be voted on tomorrow, Speaker.

1630

Here's what we need to do. First, we need to produce more jobs and increase take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt. The Million Jobs Act will balance the budget quicker, using tools like an across-the-board wage freeze, and will reduce taxes on employers so they can start hiring people again.

Second, we must ensure affordable energy that will create jobs, not eliminate jobs. Our Million Jobs Act will provide cost-efficient and reliable energy and put an end to expensive wind and solar subsidies that have driven up costs and punished manufacturers and families and seniors with high electricity bills.

Next, we need to train more skilled workers to meet the demand in trades and help young people find good jobs. Our Million Jobs Act will change the apprentice-to-journeyman ratio to one-to-one and abolish the College of Trades, which is nothing but a tax on workers and a costly bureaucracy that gets in the way of new job opportunities.

Fourth, our leader Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act will increase trade with our neighbours. We will require the government of Ontario to begin negotiations to join the economic partnership of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Finally, our leader, Tim Hudak, will stand tomorrow on his Million Jobs Act saying that we must end the bureaucratic runaround that inhibits job creation. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, complying with Ontario's regulatory requirements costs Ontario businesses \$11 billion annually. The Million Jobs Act will reduce the regulatory burden in Ontario by a minimum of one third.

Certainly the members of the third party, if they are, as their leader says, opposed to any new taxes, will have no problem supporting both my motion today and our leader Tim Hudak's motion tomorrow. Sadly, what we've seen is them say one thing and do another. Time and time again, they call the government "scandalous" in the morning and then prop them up in the afternoon. They did so just yesterday. We'll soon see if their new-found allergy to tax increases is legitimate or whether they maybe have cooked up a secret budget deal to keep the Liberal coalition partners in power.

Speaker, it's decision time for Ontario and the members of this House. We need to support my motion on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario, and, tomorrow, support our leader Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act and get this province going in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to rise and speak to this motion, which calls for a moratorium on new taxes. New Democrats have been championing this issue of not imposing any new taxes on the middle class for quite some time. But we took it one step further: We also said that we don't want to see any new tolls or fees imposed on the middle class.

We have been leading this charge, not just for the past couple of weeks or the last week, as the Conservatives

have signed on to this, but for actually the past year. Families have overwhelmingly told us that they cannot afford any new taxes or fees; that they are feeling squeezed; that they are doing more with less, and so should we; that if they can adjust to the increasing pressure of having less money coming in and out-of-control price increases, with their grocery store, with their hydro bills and auto insurance, kids in sports and daycare and everything else, then we should be able to manage the province with similar pressures. They're tired of government going back for more and more.

Any new taxes, fees or tolls, whether it's the HST, any taxes or fees to fund public transit—and that's especially true in the north, where we're already paying our fair share. I've had the pleasure of speaking at a lot of mayoral discussions, where it has routinely been discussed that people are growing increasingly tired of seeing a lot of the revenue that comes out of northern Ontario, especially as a result of resource extraction, leave northern Ontario only to fill coffers in southern Ontario and never to be seen again; that we are routinely told when we need to make upgrades to our basic infrastructure like roads or bridges that we need to present a business case, but it's not necessarily the case for people in other parts of the province.

I've often said that it's not the case that we need more money, but it's the case that we are not spending the money we already have wisely. An example of that is with the GTHA transit funding where the province is planning to expand transit services in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. That could potentially result in a five-cent or a 10-cent increase in the price of gas per litre or an increase in the HST.

There is no mention that's ever made by this Liberal government of the 8% that has already been collected per litre of gasoline that's been sold in this province since the provincial sales tax was added to gasoline as a result of the implementation of the HST on July 1, 2010. Where has that 8% been going? There are also a number of things that were previously exempt from the PST that are now being taxed as a result of the HST.

On September 16, 2013, I asked the Minister of Finance to provide a detailed accounting of where the 8% provincial portion of the HST was spent since it was added to the price of gasoline as a result of the implementation of the HST in Ontario. The Ministry of Finance responded with, "Revenues, such as the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax, are deposited into the province's consolidated revenue fund," which, as we have seen with this Liberal government, is nothing more than just a Liberal slush fund. And it's not just gasoline. There were a number of other things that were previously exempt from the PST that are now being taxed since the HST has been implemented.

The Liberals have proven themselves to be, by their own track record, not the safe bet that voters may have hoped for. If they were safe, they wouldn't have so many black marks on their track record, and they would not be asking for more money to make up for bad decisions.

Whether it's hydro, auto insurance, Ornge, eHealth, the cancellation of the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga or taxes, the list keeps going on and on. I encourage people to remember back to the tax pledge that the Liberals made in their 2011 platform where, on page 53, it states that they will keep their commitments "without resorting to higher taxes."

When it comes to the PCs and the intent behind this motion, I think it's nothing more than a gimmick. I think that needs to be stated. With their recent media stunts asking us to sign a pledge not to add any taxes, I found that timing kind of suspect because, on February 18 this year, our NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, sent a letter to the Premier stating, "In recent months, you've made clear that you believe families should be paying more and that you are planning new taxes, tolls and fees that will hit the household budgets of families struggling with tough times."

"I will not support any new taxes, tolls or fees that hit" the middle class. "Now, more than ever, we need to respect the families who sent us here. Families tell me they cannot afford new unfair taxes and fees at this time. It is time to focus on making their lives more affordable, not more expensive."

"I am writing in the hope that you will make your plans clear, and disclose how they will impact household budgets."

The very next day, the member from Nipissing tabled this motion and challenged our party to sign a "no new taxes" pledge. This is just a prime example of the crass political games that the PC Party plays. It's just like other political games they've been playing, like voting down the routine supply motion that would allow the province to continue to pay its bills while the budget is introduced and debated.

It was a routine supply motion, and my understanding is that every routine supply motion has passed since Confederation. Again, it's a routine piece of business that we're always dealing with. If it failed to pass, it's important to mention to people at home that we would encounter situations similar to what happened in the United States from October 1 to 16 last year when the government was essentially shut down because a continuing resolution for the interim authorization of appropriations was not passed. It resulted in nearly all government services grinding to a halt and nearly 800,000 federal employees being indefinitely laid off.

What did the PCs do? They voted against this routine motion. It's the same PCs who claim, on one day, to care about business and to make sure that businesses can have better dealings with the Ontario government, that they can be paid faster, smoother, and claim to be looking out for business, yet all of those same businesses that would provide services to the province of Ontario would be put in a situation where they wouldn't get paid.

1640

Can you imagine what it would be like for Ontarians who wake up the next morning after a snowstorm only to have no highway clearing performed? The PCs claim to

care about that, but they're reckless. What would happen for somebody who needed to go to the hospital to get some medical treatment, only to find the doors locked, or seniors who are in long-term-care homes who need regular care? And yet they tell us that we should be trusting them to lead this province. These are the types of crass political games that the Progressive Conservatives play.

So they can hold as many round tables across the province and talk to as many people as they want, but they won't act in the best interests of the people across this province because they only act in their own self-interest.

While the PCs are content to play political games, the Liberals are determined to overtax Ontarians to the point that it breaks their spirit. People can only be asked to be stretched so far, and many are already at the edge. People in this province do not have to accept this, and the NDP does not support it. Liberals are trying to push taxes up while we in the NDP are trying to push things down, like auto insurance premiums and small business tax. We are making jobs a priority as well as trying to pull up the minimum wage while we hold taxes down. We know that we have to make life more affordable for Ontarians, and for these reasons, I will be supporting this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Vaughan can actually talk openly now.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak openly. It was hard for me to stay in my seat and listen as closely as I did to both of the speeches that have just preceded mine, but I did my best to restrain myself psychologically, as I listened to the comments made by both the sponsor of this motion, the member from Nipissing, and of course the member of the NDP caucus, who spoke just a couple of minutes ago.

I don't have a ton of time, Speaker, but I did want to say that I listened intently to the sponsor of this motion today, the member from Nipissing, and in everything he said during the 10 or so minutes that he spoke, I am prepared to admit to those watching and everyone else here in this chamber that there was, in fact, one thing, one sentence, one phrase that he used that I actually agree with. There was one in that entire discussion. I'm going to paraphrase; I don't have access at this moment to the exact quote. The member from Nipissing said that previous or past behaviour is the best indicator of future behaviour. I'm paraphrasing, Speaker. And as much as I disagree with virtually every other punctuation mark, letter or phrase in that speech, that one particular sentence, Speaker, I agree with. I think it's really important.

This wouldn't be my first opportunity to convey this message in this chamber, but I will do it again, and I will do it again gladly. It is a little bit rich—for folks watching in my community of Vaughan and in communities like Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and others—to sit here or to watch from home and to listen to that member and members of that caucus, the Ontario PC caucus, talk

about what might have come in the past and what might come in the future. That is a caucus and that is a party that in 2003, when they were booted, deservedly so, from office by the people of Ontario in dramatic fashion, left a \$6-billion hidden deficit that they were not forthright with the people of Ontario about.

Over the course of their time in office, they closed hospitals and they starved Ontario's infrastructure budget. They closed schools. They threw education workers and health care workers out of work. They filled in subways. This is a well-worn phrase and a well-used phrase in this chamber, and deservedly so. We all remember the Eglinton line that was filled in. Over the last 10 years, we are a government that has invested significantly in all aspects of improving Ontario and moving it forward.

Now, it may be easy for some members opposite to talk about the fact that they weren't here back in 1995, 1996, 1997 or 1998, and the member who sponsored today's motion wasn't a member in this House, nor was I at that particular time. But here's the interesting thing, Speaker: His leader was. Mr. Hudak, the leader of the official opposition, sat in this chamber, sat in the caucus of the former Premier, and he voted with every single measure, all of those things that I talked about a second ago: closing hospitals, starving the infrastructure budget, moving Ontario backwards, recklessly damaging core public services in this province. Mr. Hudak and other members who continue to serve in leadership positions in that caucus were quite prepared to be there, to vote in support of those measures.

Interestingly, Speaker, for the last 10 years, we have taken the steps to move the province forward and to invest in building hospitals and to invest in extending highways, like Highway 427 in my community of Vaughan. We have taken steps to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in subway extensions, like the Spadina subway extension that's currently under construction that is going to be running up to York University and up into Vaughan, in the Jane and Highway 7 area, in 2016. We have taken those decisions, and every single time, Mr. Hudak and members of the Ontario PC caucus voted against those kinds of progressive, productive, positive measures—every single time. Then we brought in legislation to make sure that no future government in this province could do what they did, and hide a deficit of \$6 billion.

Let's reflect for a quick second about what they did during the 2003 campaign, and just before that campaign. They had a finance minister of that day serving in their caucus and in their government who stood in this place, or perhaps it was at a car parts manufacturer nearby—

Hon. Jeff Leal: It was Magna.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It was Magna—thank you very much. They stood at Magna, and they told the people of Ontario, in their budget in 2003, and then throughout that election campaign that followed not too long after that budget, that the province's books were balanced. Then we found out after the fact that it wasn't true.

We passed legislation to make sure that that could never take place again in the province of Ontario, and the leader of the official opposition and members of that caucus voted against it. They have consistently done what they can to obstruct and to defeat every single progressive measure that demonstrates this government's commitment to invest in crucial infrastructure.

Here's the good thing. Here's the really good news for the people watching and for those who are in the chamber right now: The people of Ontario have seen the movie before that this gang is putting out there right now. They've seen it before. They saw it from 1995 to 2003, and do you know what the verdict was, Speaker? The verdict was that they were resoundingly and deservedly defeated in 2003, and again in 2007 when they offered up similar things, and again in 2011 when they still couldn't get off the particular message track they seemed to be stuck on.

I'm confident, because I have an immense amount of faith in the people of my community and the people of communities right across this province, that at some point in the future, when we eventually go back to the people, and all parties ask for their faith and their support, that that caucus, that leader, this member and most of his friends over there on that side—because of the recklessness of what they propose, generally speaking—will be defeated once again.

I think it's also important to note—I don't have that much time left now, Speaker—that I did listen closely to the member of the third party who spoke just a second ago. I understand that there's an effort there from time to time to draw a distinction between the two opposition parties, the PCs and the NDP. What I found interesting today was that, for all of the things we heard from the NDP caucus about what they don't think should be happening in the province of Ontario, we heard almost nothing—not for the first time, not for the second time, perhaps not even for the 100th time recently, we did not hear any clear, definitive sense of the direction they want the province to go in. We have seen now over the last number of months—disappointingly, I know, to people right across this province—that Andrea Horwath and that caucus don't seem to be interested in putting forward any kind of plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think we'll be mentioning the riding, not the leader of the third party.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you, Speaker. I think what's disappointing to people in my riding and communities across the province is that the leader of the third party and members of her caucus seem unwilling or incapable of putting any kind of plan forward, and that's unfair to the people of Ontario. So I'd be interested to hear discussions over the course of the rest of today and, as we move forward, over the next number of weeks and months.

People have an opportunity here to witness both opposition parties: a reckless, destructive agenda put forward by the PC Party, and no particular plan whatsoever put forward—from time to time, once in a while—by the Ontario NDP. It's not good enough.

The people of this province understand that the Ontario Liberal government has a plan to invest in people, to invest in modern infrastructure and to do what we can do to create a dynamic and innovative business climate. The good news, yet again, is that our plan is balanced, our plan is fair and, best of all, the Ontario Liberal government's plan is working.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are you talking before I'm talking? The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be able to speak and rise in the chamber. I appreciate your ability to introduce me.

I also had a wonderful discussion here with the Minister of Transportation. We don't see eye to eye on this, but it is very clear that I do see eye to eye with our finance critic, Vic Fedeli, who I think delivered a very good summation of his points of view. I clearly think that the point of view that we're putting forward is the right one for the province.

1650

I just want to say, with respect to this motion, that it is important for us to recognize that Ontario families are stretched in an unprecedented way today. They're struggling with the high cost of living. They're struggling with the possibility that they may not have a job. They're struggling with the high taxes they pay, and, of complete relevance to me, they're struggling with their inability to pay their hydro bills.

I spoke at length this morning about the challenges our hydro bills are—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell calls those people “whining,” those people who contact us with high propane bills, high bills for—

Mr. Grant Crack: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order from the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: On occasion, there is some heckling that goes back and forth in this House. The member from Nepean—Carleton has insinuated that I said something. I would like her to kindly withdraw. I did not say those words. She's taking them out of context.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): With all due respect, I can't ascertain whether you did or not; I don't have any proof in front of me. As long as it was not unparliamentary, I really can't say anything.

The member will continue.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): By the way, to the member heckling, it has certainly gone up a notch in the last couple of minutes, and I'll be watching very closely.

Go ahead.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I can say this: I was not heckling, because I'm the speaker.

I will say this, as well: My constituents and those across the province have been telling us that they have an inability to pay an insurmountable amount of taxes to this Liberal government, primarily because they cannot afford their high cost of hydro.

I was in that member's riding to meet with the Rockland chamber of commerce. The business people there told me that they couldn't afford their hydro bills. The member from Nipissing, our critic, was with me as well. He will attest to the fact that the primary concern for the folks at that round table was the high cost of hydro. We had that opportunity. I encourage the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell to understand the issues that are important to the people he represents.

I would like to point out that AMPCO, the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, said that their “latest benchmarking analysis compares Ontario's industrial rates with those in other provinces in Canada as well as selected US markets. Our analysis shows that Ontario has the highest industrial rates in North America. Ontario not only has the highest delivered rates of all these jurisdictions; the disparity in rates also is growing.”

For 100 years, this province built a strong economy based on low taxes, based on major branch-plant economies, and based on affordable energy rates. For the last decade, we've had a vast departure from that economic policy and that industrial policy and that energy policy that were so closely linked, and we're seeing today that that has created not only problems with jobs; it has caused this government to try to tax more, and it has driven our hydro rates so high that people in the communities that I represent and in the surrounding communities are telling me that their old age security cheque is lower than their hydro bill. That's of concern to me. That's why I support the member from Nipissing putting forward this piece of legislation that would suggest to the assembly, but also to the people of the province of Ontario, that we cannot afford more taxes by this Liberal government.

I am about to close, Speaker, because I want to split my time with my colleagues.

I will make a point for the member from Vaughan. He suggested that his party was the party for transit in Ontario, and I beg to differ. We calculated the amount of subway lines and subways that have been built here in the province of Ontario, particularly in the city of Toronto, and it stacks up this way: Progressive Conservative Party, 62; Liberals—and I'll do this for my friend from Ottawa Centre—0.

The only party that built this province was the Progressive Conservative Party. The only party that brought forward cheap and affordable energy rates in Ontario was the Progressive Conservative Party. And the only party that is going to bring jobs back to this province is the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership, the premiership, of Tim Hudak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure to stand in the House and speak to the motion that's before us today. I will be addressing some of the comments, of course, because some of them are completely and utterly outrageous.

I do want to say, though, to the member for Nipissing, who has actually brought this motion to the floor of the Legislature today, that we did travel around the province and sit on the finance committee and listen to the diverse opinions across the province. The one thing that we did hear which was resounding from town to town, from city to city, from region to region, is that the proposed gas tax increase would not only hurt revenue generation for everybody; it would negatively affect tourism. In fact, the fellow from North Bay actually—it stays with me—said, “This gas tax will kill tourism. Don't do it to us.”

There was a level of desperation in those finance committees that I haven't heard, and actually, the fear was probably the most powerful thing. The fear was tangible. The Liberal plan for this province is—their record is so poor, and their plans are so misguided that people were literally begging us to hold them to account and to make sure that no new taxes come down from this government. We have taken that task to heart. We have stayed true to our key focus, which is affordability for the people of this province, and we've done so in a number of ways, but with a renewed focus on job creation.

Just to be clear, though, we will not support any more gas taxes, as our leader has made very clear. We will not support an increase in payroll taxes, as our leader has made very clear. With regard to the corporate tax rates, we've heard loud and clear from businesses: They think it's a competitive rate. We are hopeful, though, and we're going to stick to our guns on the 2% fairness tax which we negotiated in the first budget, which has generated revenue for the province: Those people who are making over half a million dollars pay 2% more. It's a very reasonable plan, it resonates well across the province, and it's good for the province. So we want to see that fairness tax stay in our priorities.

It is interesting, though, to see the juxtaposition in how parties see themselves, quite honestly. The Conservatives have brought forward this motion through the member from Nipissing today, and yet for two and a half years, they have let the clock run down by not participating in this democracy. They've taken it to an all new level of negative and cynical politics by, of course, the vote on the supply motion that happened this week. It's important for people who are at home—my mom included, who will know this now because I've told her—that no Ontario government has ever fallen on a supply motion. This is a housekeeping measure. It's reckless to play these kinds of games, and it is dangerous to our democracy because the level of engagement that we have in the province of Ontario is already at an all-time low. When people who are paying attention to what happens in this House see the leader of the official opposition play these games—that is what they are, and the issues are too serious that are before us to play those

kinds of games—they get disengaged. We need people to pay attention to what is happening in this House, and we want them to. As the third party, we want them to pay attention to the fact that, for the last two budget cycles, we have successfully negotiated wins for the people of this province, and that's what they expect us to do.

We come to this place each and every day from a position of respect for this minority government. I know it doesn't sit that well, with two and a half years on the sidelines, with the PCs. They're struggling. They're struggling to hold their base, and that's why you see these sort of public relations acts or media acts. It's turning into a bit of a circus. We want to stay focused on the jobs.

To be fair to the member for Nipissing, that finance committee, what we heard—you have to be respectful of what you hear from the people of this province. That is why we will be supporting this motion.

That said, our priority in this place, aside from the renewed focus on jobs—it's a very different plan than this million jobs plan that the leader of the PC caucus has brought forward, which is not targeted to any specific area. It's vague. It's as vague as you can actually get. And actually, it builds on some of the principles of the Liberal government, which have proven to not be successful. So if we supported that plan, then we'd both be wrong.

I waited a long time to use that line. I think it's a good line. Yes, it's a good line.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's good. It's a good line.

1700

Ms. Catherine Fife: But going back to the very heart of this issue, Mr. Speaker, is that New Democrats are not only focused on creating jobs and building confidence in the economy, but we certainly want to end the waste, which is why, in the last budget session, we introduced the Financial Accountability Officer. I think it would be good for everyone in this House to know that we just finished the first round of interviews for that officer. Please remember that we negotiated the FAO last May. It is now February 2014, nine and a half months later.

We wanted to hire a Financial Accountability Officer; we didn't want to give birth to one.

It's important, because this is a measure—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. This is a measure that is needed for the province of Ontario. Actually, it's a forward-thinking accountability officer, who would end the waste and ensure that any policies or legislation that happen in this place are actually based on fact and not fiction. We see that as a very key issue, because ultimately it is about trust. When the PC caucus continues to play the games, as they have, and when the Liberals continue to break promises that they put forward in their last platform, we have to be honest: There is a serious trust issue. So we're going to stay focused on ensuring that that Financial Accountability Office is established. We see it as a necessary way for us to get spending in control in this place, with the goal of reprioritizing those tax

dollars to the very issues that we know are key to this province, which are front-line health care, special education services and the education system, and, yes, transit and infrastructure, because there are a lot of jobs to be created on that front.

When we look at the track record thus far of the last two and a half years of this minority government, we actually have some tangible results that we can take to the people that have actually proven to be very successful. While the PC caucus has struggled to prove themselves, not only to their own base but to the rest of the province, we have been able to present pragmatic solutions on the economy and on the social infrastructure that is needed to actually inspire people to come to this province and invest. We have to be very cognizant of the fact that the current environment that we are working in in this province is fairly dire. I am concerned, just as the member from Nipissing, actually, about the effects that these potential tax increases will have on future Ontarians and investment in industry and innovation.

A recent study said almost a third of Canadian households report never or almost never having any money left to save after paying their bills. When the respondents were asked why they were not able to save, they responded that they felt their incomes were not keeping pace with the cost of living. This is a collective issue we all have to struggle with, and I know that we have different approaches to the economy. We do favour a targeted tax credit system for investing in research and innovation and commercializing that research to address productivity and create jobs. We certainly, of course, have been a huge proponent of the job creator tax credit.

I was speaking with the deputy mayor of Leamington the other day and I was telling him about this idea, because those 700 jobs that we lost in Ontario as the Liberals watched them leave the province—Ohio offered the job creator tax credit, which gained Heinz \$530,000 because they were rewarding that company for creating 250 jobs in Ohio. That holds onto the jobs. It's a signal from the government that they're interested in that kind of investment and that they are pro-business.

What we've seen, though, from the Liberals is picking and choosing winners, and that does not instill confidence in the province of Ontario. When I was at ROMA this week, I asked them, "This southwestern development fund: Is it working for you?" Do you know what they said back to us? They said, "We don't really know how these decisions are being made. Who is making these decisions, aside from the fact that some of those key investments were made in by-election areas?" We really feel that if you had a local regional board who would make those decisions—because they know their community best; they certainly know their community better than this government—then that money would strategically be invested and then you'd actually have a significant amount of buy-in as well.

This motion, which addresses some key issues around affordability—and I want to say that I'm respectful of the position that this member has brought forward, because this motion is reflecting the reality of the people of this

province. While we don't agree with everything, and we certainly don't agree with the games—quite honestly, it's frustrating and sometimes embarrassing to see the games played out in this place—we understand that the people of this province are feeling squeezed.

We've listened carefully, and that's why we brought forward a balanced and measured approach around minimum wage with the support of small businesses, because small and medium-sized businesses create jobs. In fact, they are a huge generator for the economy and for jobs, and we want to be respectful of that position. When you listen carefully and you just don't hear what you want to hear, then you have a responsibility as a member of provincial Parliament, as a leader of a party, to actually take those voices into consideration as you develop policy.

Here we are, two and a half years later into this session of the Legislature. We've seen from the PC caucus motions—you know, it's a fine motion—but nothing, no action. For us, it's a matter of being disrespectful to the people of this province. We have tried, and it has not been easy, to work with the Liberal government and to bring forward the priorities of the people of this province. We have some common understanding with the people we serve. They want us to come here each and every day, and they want us to put their priorities on the table, be it affordability around auto insurance, be it standing up to unfair taxes and tolls, or standing up for practical and responsible minimum wage paired with reductions in small business taxes. I understand that people are unsettled by it, that it's balanced, that it's pragmatic, that it recognizes that you have to generate revenue in order to support the social infrastructure that we all value.

We're going to continue to stay the course on this. We will be supporting this motion. It's an acknowledgment that the people of this province are hurting and that this government has been disrespectful of the tax dollars that have come into this House. We're going to continue to do the hard work of bringing the priorities of people to this place, because it's an honour and it's a privilege to be here, and the responsibility carries a lot of weight. The games, they need to end.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The motion today shows the panic and desperation rising among members of the Ontario PC Party. They're frightened, and they have good reason to be. The PC Party has publicly flip-flopped on its strident anti-union policies, even as the member from Cambridge recycled the same Tea Party, out-of-touch, right-wing, anti-labour rhetoric yet again today in members' statements.

The Ontario PC Party has become the voice of yesterday's status quo, telling Ontarians they should not do anything at all to address the 21st century's defining challenges. All they propose to do is chase away one million jobs. Just as this patently contradictory motion says that Ontarians shouldn't have to actually pay for anything, the PC Party repeatedly seeks to disassemble the ability of government to be able to take any substan-

tive action in any field by taking away from the province the ability to invest in the future of its citizens.

There are some strong reasons the Ontario PC Party has been blown out in the 905 belt and in Ontario's urban areas since the end of the Davis years. They propose abandoning those of us who live in urban areas with no way of getting around other than on already clogged roads. They filled in the Eglinton subway tunnel at a cost of \$150 million of taxpayers' funds while in their sad, sorry term of government. They withdrew altogether from funding public transit. Nine years after the end of those lost PC years, Ontario is just catching up on the neglect of the Tea Party Tory years.

1710

Speaker, it is laughable for the Ontario Tea Party Tories to hector any government on managing the economy, let alone this government, which has actually had to pay their bills during our 10 and a half years in office. The PC Party purports to talk about taxpayers digging into their pockets even as they left behind a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit when the voters tossed them out in 2003.

Hon. Jeff Leal: That was Erik Peters, the Auditor General.

Mr. Bob Delaney: But wait, as the hucksters say on TV—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please. You know, usually when someone gets up and they're irritating the other party, we get heckling from the other party against the speaker, but I get more heckling in conjunction with the speaker from his own group.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: This is cheering.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not cheering; it's trying to aggravate. So I would suggest that the members want to listen to their own member and keep it down a bit, because the Speaker doesn't like it—especially the one from Etobicoke North.

Carry on.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

The PC Party purports to talk about taxpayers digging into their own pockets even as they left behind a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit when the voters tossed them out in 2003. But wait, as the hucksters say on TV; there's more. The great-granddaddy of PC financial boondoggles is their \$20.6-billion stranded debt left behind for the taxpayers after the failed neocon-inspired privatization of Ontario Hydro in the 1990s. For further details, see the 2010 Auditor General's report at www.auditor.on.ca. The specifics are on page 30.

Today, that \$20.6-billion souvenir debt from the Mike Harris era has been paid down to about \$3.8 billion and will be paid off in the next few years. Like the \$5.6-billion budget deficit this government inherited and the post-recession debt that this province incurred to keep Ontarians working and to protect our auto sector in the last recession, this government deals with deficits and debt in a traditional and effective way: We pay it down.

But that is not what this Tea Party-inspired resolution proposes. It says that Ontario must cut its way to prosperity. To quote Professor Mark Blythe of Brown University, who wrote in the May-June 2013 issue of the

US bi-monthly magazine *Foreign Affairs* about PC-style austerity policies—I'll use his words:

"The Eurozone countries, the United Kingdom and the Baltic states have volunteered as subjects in a grand experiment that aims to find out if it is possible ... to cut its way to prosperity.

"The results of the experiment are now in, and they are equally consistent: austerity doesn't work."

The article shows that every country that had embraced austerity policies ended up with significantly more debt than it had when it started. There are in fact no real-world examples of Tea Party Tory policies like the one advanced in this resolution ever working. For the families living in the communities represented by the member from Nipissing's colleagues, the inevitable outcome of forbidding the wealth-creating engines of the 21st century—which are cities—from investing in themselves is to do worse than kill the goose that lays the golden eggs of the province's wealth; it is to undermine the ability of Ontarians to fund programs and services in the very regions that sent PC members to this Legislature.

The Tea Party Tories have never explained to anyone that if corporations are not spending and if government is forced to stop spending, then how is anyone other than the independently wealthy to have anything at all to either invest or save? How will anyone have a fabric of community and social supports to sustain them? They have never provided an answer for that.

These very Tea Party ideological policies have not merely failed in the United States; they have kept the US economy sputtering for lack of investment, even as the 400 richest Americans now control more assets than the poorest 150 million—about half the US population.

The truth is that today, nine out of 10 Ontarians pay less tax than on the last day of the Harris-Eves PC regime. The truth, Speaker, is that following the adoption of the value-added or harmonized sales tax, inflation has been lower in Ontario than in other areas with the inefficient, wasteful, duplicative, red-tape-laden and expensive sales tax that the Ontario PC Party supported.

The truth is that small business taxes are down and the HST has reduced business costs and paperwork. Ontario does not need these tried-and-failed, threadbare, ideology-driven tax ideas that would disinvest in Ontario.

We don't need any more sales of assets like the 401 giveaway scandal of the 1990s, in the Harris-Eves era. We don't need our hospitals and schools sold to private firms. We don't need the regressive labour policies of Tea Party Tories to drive down the wages of hard-working families or to make the wealthy even richer.

We do need our cities, the wealth creation engines of our province and every region on earth, to move people and goods quickly, economically and safely, and we need to pay our bills and not pretend that there is a free lunch. This resolution, born of a failed ideology and a grab-bag of bad ideas, won't do the job. I can't support this resolution and neither should this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this opposition day motion today, and I thank the critic for our party, Vic Fedeli, for bringing this motion forward. I hope that the government members are actually listening to some of the stories I'm going to tell of just how badly the Liberal tax increases are hurting my constituents.

The motion says, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that many Ontario families are struggling with the high cost of living," including unaffordable hydro rates. The motion then goes on to say that Ontarians already pay enough taxes—amen!—and shouldn't be forced to dig deeper to pay for the Liberal government's waste and scandals.

Well, we in this House know all about the waste and scandals that this Liberal government has done, like the billion-dollar gas plant cancellations, another billion wasted in the eHealth scandal and the hundreds of millions on Ornge, so I can't believe that the government would want to impose more taxes on the burdened people that we have. Certainly, they do want to, but they say—how could the people of Ontario trust them with their money?

Finally, the motion asks the Legislative Assembly to agree that the Liberal government will not introduce or raise any taxes, "including, but not limited to, the gas tax, payroll taxes and corporate tax rates." The member from Mississauga just spoke eloquently—it didn't make any sense to me; I don't think it makes sense to the people of Ontario—about the goodness that they have done as Liberals to this province, because they have not. They've got to stop living in Disneyland and come back to the reality that we have in this province now.

The Liberal government, running down—there's a health tax that they've introduced since they've been in government of up to \$900 a year per taxpayer. Despite this additional health tax, Ontarians are paying more out of pocket for medical services like eye exams and physiotherapy.

There's this HST, which added 8% to the cost of many services that had not been previously subject to the provincial sales tax, everything from haircuts—but home heating, which has had a huge impact this year, that people have to pay the HST on their home heating fuels.

We've got the College of Trades, another tax on industry that the people are being forced to pay—some increases for their licence of up to 675%, in which they get no more value for that. Again, it's just another tax grab from the Liberal government.

The WSIB, Bill 119, the independent contractors—the CFIB just awarded the Liberal government the 2013 Paperweight Award because of the WSIB burden that they have placed on businesses, just another sample of burdens they put on businesses. They're leaving the province, and we see the unemployment rate so high in this province, especially in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

They introduced eco taxes on everyday items like cleaning supplies, increased taxes on tires, and then of course we have the hydro rates, which is the number one

thing that's driving people either out of their houses, out of their businesses or out of the province of Ontario. They've doubled since they got elected, and the Minister of Energy is now saying there's nowhere for electricity prices to go but up, so they're going to be tripled for sure.

You have the HST, which is now added onto the debt retirement charge on your hydro bills. I get this all the time, going, "Why the heck is this debt retirement charge still on there?" Well, it should have been paid off in 2012, according to the Minister of Finance—the Liberals' own Minister of Finance saying that. We're paying HST now on that debt retirement charge, and it won't be paid off until 2016.

1720

You continue to waste money. My constituents have tightened their belts as much as they can. They're doing their laundry late at night; they are trying to keep their hydro costs down. They're heating with wood if they can because of the cost of electricity, oil and propane.

I have a fuel bank in my riding—not just food banks; I have fuel banks. I have such desperate situations that I have a fuel bank, which has run out several times this year already. People going into wood suppliers' stores are saying, "Could I just have \$25 worth of wood? That's all I can afford for now." It is that bad out there.

Today I had an email from my constit office that all a poor lady had left was change to pay for groceries in the store lineup, because she has to pay her hydro bill. It's the heat, then the groceries.

The food banks are burdened, no question. People are shocked about the fuel bank story, but it shows you that it is desperate times out there.

We had round tables. The member from Nepean-Carleton came, as the energy critic. We did a round table for businesses. The stories we heard were unbelievable. Besides Hydro One's bungling and mismanagement of bills, just the costs of electricity are hit so bad that they can't—they have to keep the lights on and the refrigerators going, but they're going to have to cut the staff. They have nowhere else to save any money, if they can stay open at all.

When you have the proposed gas tax increase that the Liberals are bringing in, which is an urban tax, of up to 10 cents per litre, you can imagine my people up there aren't too happy because they can hardly pay their bills. They all have to drive, if they can afford a car, and so that extra cost of 10 cents a litre on their gas is hundreds, if not a thousand dollars, more out of their pocket yet again. That increase in gas tax will also, of course, drive up the cost of food, putting the squeeze on both the consumers and the grocery stores they shop in.

I have more and more people relying, as I said, on food banks, and the sum is adding up of all the increased taxes they've had to pay.

The tourism sector is going to be hit if that gas tax comes on. People aren't going to be travelling as much. That's going to hurt all of our ridings, because we all have a certain degree of tourism within our ridings.

Just think of the school boards, the municipalities, and how much more they're going to have to pay with this

gas tax. At ROMA this week, the OPP commissioner said that for every one cent that gas goes up, the OPP increases their costs by \$250,000—the same for other emergency vehicles.

The OPP costing, if I can just touch on that for a minute—the proposed Liberal government's increasing of OPP policing for municipalities. In Haliburton county, the cost of the OPP will go up from \$3.3 million to \$8.5 million. Haliburton county has the highest level of unemployment and poverty in the province, and it's the second-hardest-hit municipality with this increase. North Kawartha: from \$653,000 to over \$1.4 million is the increase. Trent Lakes: from \$914,000 to more than \$2 million. For the portion of the city of Kawartha Lakes served by the OPP, they're going to see an increase from \$6 million to \$10 million. These costs are thrown on the backs of municipalities, but guess what? There's only one taxpayer. It's going to come back down to them too.

This is a serious situation. This government has increased taxes to the breaking point. We cannot have any more tax increases in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair, of course, a welcome reprieve from someone—anyhow, I won't even go there.

I'm pleased to join the debate today. It has been invigorating to listen to the various comments from all sides of the House on a fundamental aspect of the job that we do here: taxation, and representation based on that taxation.

New Democrats already, I think, have indicated that we are going to support this motion. It's indicative of the real frustration that's coming out of our ridings in terms of how our communities, our neighbours and our friends feel about the failure, in terms of making prudent investments, that the government has taken, the abdication of their responsibility to provide fiscal oversight—something that we've remedied, thankfully, through our imposition of the Financial Accountability Office. New Democrats are proud of that. The overall waste of valuable government resources is what frustrates our communities and our friends in our communities. For that reason, I certainly will be supporting the bill.

But I have to take issue with much of the commentary that came out of the PC caucus, specifically from the motion's originator, the member from Nipissing. From the top, he referenced job losses in the manufacturing sector without indicating the enormous toll that multilateral free trade agreements have had on manufacturing in the province of Ontario and across the country. Those are trade agreements that have been signed by Conservative and Liberal governments at the federal level and endorsed by Liberal and Conservative governments at the provincial level for 25 years. Had you walked the Ambassador Bridge along with those auto workers back in the mid and late 1980s, who warned that the trade agreements that were on the table were going to devastate manufacturing in the province, you would have seen that it has now come to fruition. So I put much of the blame

on free trade agreements that tip the balance in favour of the cheapest-wage jurisdictions on the planet. If we're going to do business with them, then it is a losing battle.

The member from Nipissing talked about the high rate of corporate taxes. Well in fact, in the days of the Mike Harris era, corporate tax rates were well above what they are today—18%. If he claims that those days were good, I would say maybe he might want to return to a figure that was closer to 18%. But I don't think that's exactly what he's talking about.

One of the most egregious things that I've heard come out of this debate today is something that the PCs are talking about in terms of us supporting the programming motion that came before the Legislature. I've now voted on three programming motions, and I understand their impacts. Many people in the province of Ontario don't know what a programming motion is, so I'm proud to stand here today to teach them or tell them what a programming motion is.

A programming motion gives the government the ability, legislative capacity and mandate, to pay the bills, to keep the lights on, to make sure that the EMS trucks go out and respond to calls, to make sure that the 911 service is in place, to pay doctors and nurses, to keep the lights on and to pay the teachers. The Progressive Conservative government of Ontario voted yesterday to shut down those services in the province of Ontario—full stop. They absolutely wanted to walk away, shut the lights off and, I guess, head for a polling station where, in fact, there would be no money allocated for Elections Ontario to even run an election. They are dislocated from reality and dislocated from logic if they think that that actually makes sense to the people of the province.

I've been able, thankfully, to explain it to my constituents who are calling and saying, "What are the PCs doing? What are they doing?" I have to explain. They say, "That is ridiculous." It's dangerous, it's absolutely reckless, and it's irresponsible. They're certainly not fit to govern.

I've been hearing a lot of this talk about a million jobs coming out of somewhere from the PC caucus. It's maybe a conglomeration of their white papers—a million words that add up to nothing. What's interesting is that the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has been a member of this House for well over a decade. He was a part of the government—I believe he was a cabinet minister. I haven't checked his stats. I'll Google him later on.

Imagine: The leader of the PC Party has this plan for a million jobs in his back pocket, and he has been keeping it there for over a decade. Lo and behold, here comes the million jobs plan. I wonder how many times he has watched the Austin Powers movies over and over because it seems as though that's where he's getting his job plans from—one million jobs. It's an infomercial. People aren't buying it. They absolutely see through the fact that it's all glitz, glamour and rhetoric. It has no bearing.

If he was serious about creating jobs in this province, he would address the most pressing issues: the income inequality gap that exists in our economy, not only in this

province but across the country. He would also have a real clear vision of how our hydro distribution and production system needs government oversight from the provincial level to be able to ensure that it's done at cost and effectively, that we're making those investments, not simply selling them off as they did under Mike Harris in the rush to privatize everything.

They have resorted to their old plan. We've heard it before. Fortunately, we know better now. We know better than to buy into the rhetoric around cutting red tape. What does that really mean in real speak? It means a return to the ages of Walkerton. That's what they mean when they say cutting red tape: cutting health regulations, cutting health inspectors, privatizing essential services, deregulating services. It means nothing about making businesses more productive. It means an absolutely reckless and irresponsible return to the governance of the PCs, and we're not buying it.

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Of course, New Democrats have put together a practical, prudent, responsible plan, and people actually understand it. The government is so anxious because they want to adopt our plan like they do with all the other ones. We will give it to them in small doses so that they can digest it, because we don't want to overwhelm them.

I am proud to stand as a New Democrat here today to add to this debate and to provide some insight as to how we will govern, and I'm pleased to hear from other members in the chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are some days when I am very sad as a Canadian.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Is this one of them?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd just like to not be heckled by my own team, please.

I've been in this House for four years, and I would say that after four years there are too many days when it's discouraging. I remember when I left the New Democratic Party for the same reasons, for the same shift that you're now making and that it made before. It's great politics; it's not nation-building.

I think about every great prime minister. Read about Robert Baldwin, who got the Act of Union and brought Upper and Lower Canada together. He was the real father of Confederation and he was one of the greatest nation-builders.

John A. Macdonald was Prime Minister of a bankrupt, badly-in-debt colonial government with very high taxes because they had so few of them. John A. Macdonald didn't talk about two-bit tax cuts. John A. Macdonald saw the potential of Canada. John A. Macdonald started laying rail tracks through northwestern Ontario, and when those rail tracks sunk into the bogs and mud and he was surrounded in scandal in the Abbott affair, he got up—

Mr. Bob Delaney: He was a Conservative.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I didn't interrupt you. I don't interrupt people when they're speaking, and I would like

just a little respect for each other, because I think we don't give each other enough of that.

He laid track across bald prairie, through the steepest mountains, almost, in the world to a small fishing village. Today, some days I don't think we can even build a subway. But we used to have the idea of nation-building. Can you imagine the debt and the tax burden on the Canadian government? Would we have a country today if we didn't have that kind of leadership? I don't think so. Do I ever hear a John A. Macdonald speech in this House about nation-building, about sacrifice, about dreams, about the impossibility of their fiscal situation, of a poor immigrant country where very few people were educated and almost no one had health care or education? How did he find the vision to build the national dream? Are we John A. Macdonald's children? Are we capable of that kind of dream?

When did we build our infrastructure in this country? Prior to the Second World War and leading up to the Second World War, something astonishing happened. We raised taxes like we never had in our history—our income taxes, our sales taxes, our corporate taxes. We built a war machine to defeat Hitler like none other in the world. Canada had the third-largest navy in the world. We built stuff that no one thought was possible. That was nation-building. An entire generation of young men and young women laid down their lives.

In the middle of the AIDS epidemic, when I lost about 30 friends in their twenties, I said, "That must have been what it was like." How did people survive when they lost everybody in public service—when public service was giving up your life—while they were paying higher taxes than we pay today? They were paying way higher taxes. The corporate tax rate wasn't 25% or 18%; it was 45%. Ask your mother or your father what their income taxes were. Remember when sales taxes were up around 20%? That's when we built 63 subways because we didn't whine about taxes like some members have because everything in your community was built by that generation. Some 80% of our infrastructure was built in that so-called high-tax period in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s when 5% of our GDP went to infrastructure, building the best hospitals in the world, the best schools in the world, the 400-series highway system—everything that we cherish today was almost built then. That is amazing.

In 1973, we went from 5% of GDP to about 0.5% of GDP. The federal government dropped its capital spend to one quarter of one per cent of GDP—less than \$3 billion in today's dollars. The provincial government did the same thing. Every Liberal, Conservative and NDP government for the last 30 years stayed at 0.5% of GDP. Then Dalton McGuinty came along—and that's when I got interested in politics in this province—and said, "We're going to 2% of GDP." The first Premier since Bill Davis to actually understand that, and if you want to understand that, call Bill Davis; ask him what he thinks—one of the last Premiers to raise taxes in this province.

We're now at 2% of GDP. We're at \$14 billion. That's the first time in over 30 years we've had a government in

Ontario that is spending \$14 billion. The municipal governments are about \$7 billion. That makes 3% of GDP. What does that mean? Higher levels of job growth. The federal government is still at one quarter of 1%. If you think that's a partisan shot, have a look at my commentary when I was mayor of Winnipeg when John Manley introduced the same budget. We need them to be at 2% of GDP. It is really critical.

What does that mean over the next 50 years? If the federal government just matched the \$14 billion and actually did what we did, it would cost \$1.5 trillion over 50 years. What would the difference in income taxes be? Some \$7 trillion more—

Ms. Catherine Fife: You said you don't want to increase taxes.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No. If the federal government went back to the same level of spending, it would mean, over the next 50 years, \$1.5 trillion—if they got to right where we are right now.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: That \$1.3 trillion would bring in \$7 trillion in revenue. It would give us 1.1% GDP growth annually higher than we do right now. If you look at the period of GDP growth between the 1940s and the 1970s, it was that level of spending that allowed this economy to expand. So before we even get to tax revenues—I don't even want to debate that because I don't think there's anybody in this House who's prepared to raise taxes in any significant way.

My question is a very simple one: How do we get back to 5% of GDP? And if we can't get back to 5% of GDP being spent on infrastructure, how do you sustain economic growth? You can't go through another 30 years, and the cute politics about everyone's favourite tax cut, to me, is not nation-building. If we don't start making the same investments that the Davis generation, the Hepburn generation, the Diefenbaker generation and the Pearson generation made, we will not grow this country.

So, before you tell me about 63 subway stations, you might want to look at the tax rates, because now we have a fully universal education system and we have a medicare system on top of that, and we're spending less. It could be an all-party effort to work together as three parties here to get this country back to 5% of GDP and not be a whiny generation but actually be the generation that sucked it up, made some decisions, stopped talking about themselves as taxpayers and became citizens again because, you know, every one out there we celebrate, all of them, Conservatives and Liberals—because there aren't any New Democrats except for Bob Rae, and this includes Bob Rae—all raise taxes. Every great Premier in this province—there isn't one you can name who didn't raise taxes, not one.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, Minister.

Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to speak to this debate.

I want to tell the folks they can turn the mute button off. I appreciated the speech by the minister. His view of history is his view, but it is not what we're debating today. I appreciate his view on it, but it is about whether or not we're going to be raising taxes in the very near future under this government, as they have stated, as they're on the record having stated, saying that they are musing about a 10% gasoline tax to fund transit. They're musing about other taxes.

The reality is, regardless of what your thought process on the other side is, you've got to get out and talk to the real people, and you've got to ask them, "Can you stand any more taxes or fee increases here in the province of Ontario?" You've got to remember that the day you're born in Ontario today you've got a \$20,000 debt; you're starting with a \$20,000 debt. The reality is that over the years, as this Liberal government has seen our debt climb to over \$270 billion, all through that period they've increased taxes, so the revenues have grown and grown, but the debt continues to skyrocket.

I mean, there's some school of thought that might say, "Look, if you're raising revenue and you're raising taxes, but you're reducing the debt and reducing that future burden on the next generation, perhaps we can buy into a little bit of that." But the reality is, you have raised the taxes and the debt has skyrocketed, so every day, we're further and further behind the eight ball under this government, and now they want to muse about putting us even further behind that eight ball.

I've heard my colleagues: our finance critic, Vic Fedeli—I thank him for introducing the motion; our energy critic, Lisa MacLeod, for her contributions to the debate; and our tourism critic and member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Laurie Scott, for her contributions. They talked about real-life stories. They talked about how people out there are hurting, and you can ignore it if you want. I say this to the members opposite: You can ignore that if you want, but you do so at your peril. Everywhere you go—I listened to the member from Mississauga-Streetsville and, good Lord, you would think that we were living in Shangri-La. You would think that Ontario was just going along tickety-boo and there wasn't a problem out there. Well, my God, he must be living in some other world to believe that. His view just wasn't realistic.

Go talk to the people on the street. Go talk to the small businessman who is struggling. Go talk to the business person who uses a lot of hydro. I've got business people in my riding who are talking about closing down because they cannot afford the cost of hydro. I have more emails and letters and calls to our office about the cost of hydro than any other issue in this province, and yet the Minister of Energy concedes that under your plan for Ontario, hydro will go up by another 42% over the next five years. If your hydro is going up 42%, where do you get the money to pay additional taxes and fees? Everywhere you go, you're getting hit by this government.

People are pleading. They're desperate. They're saying, "We're not making this up, folks. We can't take any more." Yet Kathleen Wynne and the finance minis-

ter, even though when she campaigned for leadership she talked about holding the line on spending, she talked about fiscal responsibility—she said, “Our number one priority is to get the fiscal house of Ontario in order.”

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She either didn’t mean it or she changed her mind.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But she either didn’t mean it, or she very quickly changed her mind.

We came into last year, into the budget, and all of a sudden they’re talking about, “No, no. We’re going to invest in Ontarians.” That’s just gobbledygook language. “We’re going to invest in Ontarians.” That is code for, “You know what, folks? Your taxes are going up, your fees are going up and, by God, the debt’s going up too.”

You can only bleed people for so long. They’re desperate and they’re serious. You know, I was talking to a guy the other day and he said, “When this government is through with me, the only thing I’m going to have left in my pockets is lint”—lint. And that is a true story.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Peterborough says that it’s not an original line. No, because in the last 10 years, I say to him, a lot of people are down to lint thanks to Dalton McGuinty and his successor, Kathleen Wynne.

But all across this province, we see it every day: People are leaving Ontario for better opportunities elsewhere. And why are they coming to that conclusion? Because the cost of living, the cost of doing business, the cost of providing jobs in Ontario is too expensive. Why? Because the government takes your money and they spend it as they see fit, building a bureaucracy that is much bigger than we need, putting more and more people to work on the government payroll instead of allowing the private sector to make this economy hum like it was designed to do.

So do not raise any more taxes. On behalf of the PC Party, I stand here in my place and say we speak for Ontario. We have been listening. We have toured all around the province all winter. The people don’t want more taxes; they can’t afford them. Stand in your place today and support this motion so we can unanimously say to the people, “We’re not raising taxes.”

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we all done now? Further debate.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I think the member opposite, when he was travelling around the province over the last number of months, wasn’t listening very carefully, because what I’m hearing from Ontarians is that what they’re tired of is empty rhetoric. What they’re tired of is highly partisan politics. What they’re tired of is motions like this that are torqued, highly political, partisan motions that don’t speak to what a party—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, isn’t this very nice. They actually were listening and not criti-

cizing when the member from Nipissing was speaking. Then all his crew came in and made a bigger noise than you were making.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pardon me? What did you say? Are you going to retract that?

Mr. Jim Wilson: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You’re not? The member is named.

Mr. Wilson was escorted from the chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I was saying, I wasn’t saying anything all that interesting, I didn’t think, to the folks opposite. But at the end of the day, what I find Ontarians are looking for are politicians and leaders who are going to stand for something, who are going to not only make commitments but tell them how they’re going to deliver on those commitments. I’ve said this for a very long period of time; I’ve said this before. The next politician that stands up and says they’re going to build big projects like subways without identifying how they’re going to pay for them ought to be whacked the heck out of here. I’ve said that before and I’ll say it again. I think the public’s tolerance for that kind of politics is really coming to an end. They’ve seen it too much.

The party opposite talks about building subways, but they refuse to say how they’re going to fund it. I think the public is tired of hearing this thing about if they find more waste—they can fund \$50 billion in very important transit investments by finding more waste. Mr. Speaker, we’re always looking to eliminate waste, but—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Who’s next? Continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I didn’t think what I was saying was all that interesting to the members opposite. It obviously is. I guess it’s hitting home, because they’re seeing the reality. On this side of the House, we have leaders with substance; we have a Premier with substance. On the opposite side of the House, we have blowhards who are going forward with policies that don’t make sense, that don’t add up, talking about doing things but not talking about how they’re going to pay for it, telling us what they don’t want to do rather than telling us where they want to take this province.

Mr. Speaker, I’m going to leave you with this quote. It comes from Rosalynn Carter, wife of President Carter. She said that some leaders lead people to where they want to go. Great leaders lead people to where they need to be.

That’s what we’re doing on this side of the House. On the opposite side of the House, they’re trying to step in front of the plate, and it’s not going to work.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I need to correct my record. Earlier, I made reference to a 401-giveaway scandal by the PC government. I meant to say "407-giveaway scandal."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member has the right to correct his statement. Thank you.

Mr. Fedeli has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I've obviously heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats. Order. Take your seats, please.

All those in favour of the motion will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Campbell, Sarah
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.

Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.

Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Dei Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill

McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 38; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelfh	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanhof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
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Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
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**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
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of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

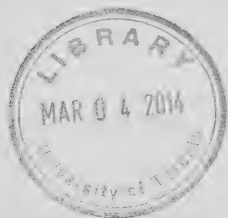
Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 27 February 2014

Jeudi 27 février 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 February 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I may or may not share my time with the member from Brampton West, but I'm just reserving my right now. That will be made clear as we go on.

It is my great pleasure today to initiate debate on Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. It's a privilege to stand in this House and say that minimum-wage earners in Ontario will be getting a raise. I was proud to stand with our Premier recently and announce that our government is increasing the minimum wage to \$11 an hour starting June 1, and we have already filed the regulation to make sure that happens. This will give Ontario the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada and builds on our strong track record of increasing living standards for workers. I'm proud that it will provide fairness for Ontarians who work for minimum wage.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act is about taking the next steps. It is about putting in place a process that makes sure that minimum wage increases in a fair, predictable and transparent way. Speaker, it is about making sure that minimum-wage workers know that their income will keep up with the cost of living, and it is about making sure that our businesses can have time to plan for their future and continue to be competitive and create jobs.

I think for all members there is a moment in their elected life, in their capacity, when they realize what motivated them to seek public office, what galvanized for them the reason to put their name on the ballot on behalf of their community and to make a difference. I'll share with you my moment and how that relates to the issue around minimum wage.

It was about 10 years ago, roughly around 2003, when the last big debate in our province was taking place around minimum wage. Speaker, you may remember that from 1995 to 2003, unfortunately, in our province the minimum wage was frozen, for that entire eight-year period. From 1995 to 2003, it was the Conservative Party that was in government at that time, and they chose not to raise the minimum wage at all—not a penny.

There was a debate that was taking place in our province at that time, and rightly so. The debate was around whether we should have an increase to minimum wage. You may remember, there was a campaign, "\$10 in 2010," that was being led by anti-poverty groups, that was being led by civil society, because everybody recognized that something needed to be done around minimum wage. Here's my moment: At that time, I was practising law in Ottawa. I was quite involved in my community of Ottawa Centre. I sat on the board, as many of you know, because I've talked about this before, of the Centretown Community Health Centre. I did a lot of work in my community, was very much engaged with the Ottawa Food Bank, which I still continue to do. And I remember thinking at that time, why is the whole notion of raising minimum wage a political subject? Why are politicians in charge? Why are politicians responsible to determine whether or not minimum wage should go up? How are we even in the situation where eight years can go by, and then hard-working Ontarians who work and live on minimum wage have not seen a penny in that rate? It was \$6.85, those who may remember, for that eight-year period.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do remember that.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: And why don't we have a system or process in place that is fair, predictable and objective? That was my thought. You know, I didn't think I was being genius in my thinking at that time. As a citizen of this great province, as somebody who was quite involved in the community and spent time working with a lot of people on issues around community health care, around primary care, and other social determinants of health like affordable housing, like better nutrition, all the kinds of things that are important to our communities that we talk about—I just wasn't comfortable where the whole notion of determining minimum wage was a political football, if I can use that expression.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, Yasir, you believe in a just society—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Absolutely. I believe in a just society, a society that is fair to Ontarians, and my thought at that time was, "Well, government's got to figure out a

better way of determining minimum wage.” Speaker, I’ll be very honest with you. I think it’s one of those things that I felt quite passionately and strongly about. I feel very humbled and privileged and honoured that 10 years later, not only, obviously, I got the chance to actually run in my community and earned the privilege to serve my community, but I’m personally in a position to—along with our government, along with our caucus, along with our Premier, because of her leadership—actually put forward a bill that we’re starting to debate today, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, doing exactly what should have been done, and that is to ensure that we have a more fair and predictable way of determining minimum wage, where we take politics out of how we set people’s wages.

That’s what we are doing, and I feel really motivated. I’ve been working on this issue for some time. Even before I was Minister of Labour, I worked with many community groups in my community of Ottawa Centre and from Ottawa, as many members have done—

Hon. Jeff Leal: They say great things about you, too, in Ottawa.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, thank you. I have taken a lot of meetings on this issue. I was first elected in 2007, in my first term, and I was always very clear. This is when I was just an MPP saying, “You know what? This is the direction our province needs to move in. We need to figure out a way of somehow indexing minimum wage to an objective criteria, a criteria that nobody disputes, a criteria that comes from a source that everybody agrees to so that minimum wage can keep pace with the cost of living, so that we don’t run into periods where minimum wage does not increase at all.”

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That’s why, Speaker, I’m also very, very proud that when our party came into government in 2003, we took a position. We said that it is unfair to hard-working Ontarians who work and live on minimum wage to freeze their wages for eight years straight, as the Conservative government under Mike Harris and the current Leader of the Opposition had done. I think that was shameful—eight years of a freeze. And these were good economic times, right? I mean, they try to take credit that somehow they created out of magic some numbers of jobs. Well, those were good, booming times. This is when Mr. Chrétien was the Prime Minister in Ottawa and they were able to eliminate the deficit.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A 63-cent dollar, too.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: A 63-cent dollar, low oil prices. But they did so. Who they neglected were the hard-working Ontarians, those who work and live on minimum wage.

I’m really proud that our government, our Liberal government, put a process in place to raise the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$10.25 in 2010.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Was it that low?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It was frozen for eight years.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, my goodness. It’s just like being in Siberia.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Progressively, in an incremental fashion, we raised the minimum wage from \$6.85 to

\$10.25 in 2010. Remember, I told you there was a campaign going on at that time: \$10 in 2010. So we raised it not to \$10 but, in fact, to \$10.25 by 2010, making minimum wage in Ontario the highest in Canada.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Were the NDP on board for that one?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, I know for sure that the PCs voted against it. At that time, at least the NDP used to talk about minimum wage; now they don’t even do that. I’ll come to that. I’ll speak to how the NDP has abandoned the hard-working Ontarians in this province, and now the NDP believes in cutting corporate taxes. The NDP does not believe in raising corporate taxes. There’s an NDP out there that nobody recognizes, and that’s a sad commentary. We’ll talk to that in a bit.

The point is that we went on to work on the issue of minimum wage from the very first day that we came into office, because Ontarians said it’s time to increase the minimum wage, and we, in a predictable and a progressive way, through legislation, increased minimum wage from \$6.85 every single year to \$10.25 in 2010. That was almost a 50% increase to the minimum wage, which, by the way, the official opposition, the PCs, voted against.

Hon. Jeff Leal: No.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: They voted against that, because they don’t believe in raising the minimum wage. They don’t believe in making sure that those Ontarians who work and live on minimum wage should see an increase, and that is shameful.

The NDP, before the Conservatives, just to note, when they were in office for five years, raised minimum wage a little under \$2 at that time—again, not making any meaningful difference in wages.

We were able to raise the minimum wage to \$10.25, even in the good times, but even through the depths of the recession. We did not put a stop to that because we wanted to make sure—even though we were fighting through the great recession that we experienced in 2008 and 2009, one of the biggest recessions since the Great Depression—that we continued with our commitment to increase the minimum wage.

Now comes the question, what are we doing now? We raised it to \$10.25, which is the highest in Canada, and this is the time to take the next step, to ensure that we bring a kind of predictability, certainty and balance to the way the minimum wage is determined and, most importantly, Speaker—and I know my colleagues on this side of the House believe it—that we take politics out of how the minimum wage is set so that it does not matter which political party is in office, it does not matter which political ideology is the fashion of the day. When it comes to the livelihood of those Ontarians who live and work on minimum wage, they know that they are going to get a raise every single year based on the cost of living. That is exactly what the Fair Minimum Wage Act is proposing in front of this House.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Even the Tea Party Tories? Do you think they’re going to—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, I hope all the parties support this—I really, really hope—because this is not a partisan issue. I’ll give this to the Conservative Party this time: I

have heard some very positive responses from them in terms of agreeing with the notion that we need to take politics out of minimum wage. What's uncertain is where the NDP stands on this, because they have been absent—and I will come to that, because I think it's an important point.

Speaker, we recognize that and have decided it is time for change, a time for consistency and fairness. We believe that both employees and employers need to be able to plan for their financial future, and to be a prosperous society, we need to ensure a fair minimum wage that also allows business to remain competitive.

So the first step we are doing is we are raising the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, as I mentioned a little earlier. That will take place on June 1.

That is not the subject of this Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, because we are doing that by regulation. That is happening by regulation; that regulation is filed. I want Ontarians to know, those who live and work on minimum wage, that raise is coming. It is not subject to the passage of this bill. On June 1, the minimum wage in Ontario will be \$11 an hour, the highest minimum wage among any province in Canada, something that we should be proud of—we should be very, very proud of.

Speaker, we have made sure that we have set a fair minimum wage, and the manner in which we have done so is in an objective and balanced way. We have determined that number by taking into account the inflation since the last increase—and that was in 2010—up to now to make sure that the purchasing power of a dollar of that minimum wage is restored to what it should be today.

As I said, this particular bill, Bill 165—I want to spend a little bit of time talking about how we arrived at this bill, the content of this bill, what are the specific details around how we are proposing to set a fair minimum wage in Ontario moving forward, year after year after year.

If passed, this bill would establish a fair, predictable and transparent approach to setting minimum wage in the future. As I said earlier, for the first time, Ontario's minimum wage would have to keep pace with the cost of living, and workers would not see their wages fall behind because of any political ideology.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act contains all of the panel's thorough and thoughtful recommendations made in their consensus report. The panel that I'm referring to is the advisory panel that we created on minimum wage, and I will come to speaking a little bit about the panel, the panel members, the process they went through, the deliberations they've had and the suggestions that they provided.

What it really means is that, if passed, the first CPI adjustment would be announced by April 1, 2015—if this bill becomes the law—and will take effect on October 1, 2015. That will be the first time we will see the first automatic increase in minimum wage based on the consumer price index of 2014, and then we'll be in a cycle every year. So every year, what we're proposing is that on April 1 of that particular year we will be able to an-

nounce the amount by which the minimum wage will be increasing based on the previous year's consumer price index, and it will come into effect on October 1, giving businesses—and this is the predictability part—a six-month notice so that they can plan for that increase that will come.

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Speaker, here's another important technical point: Any annual adjustment would be rounded to the nearest five cents when the number is calculated, and there will not be any decrease. That's an important point. So if we are looking at a circumstance, for instance, where inflation doesn't go up or if there is deflation perhaps, we will not reduce the minimum wage. It will stay the same. So that's another important principle that has been outlined in this particular bill.

In addition, our proposed legislation also puts in place a five-year review of the minimum wage and how it is set—again, this was one of the recommendations that we received from the panel—so that there is an automatic review of how the system is working, and we have enshrined that in this particular bill as well.

I'm proud that this bill would make sure that the minimum wage would keep up with the cost of living. This will ensure fairness for workers and give them a meaningful opportunity to improve their lives. We're talking about students working their way through school. We're talking about parents working hard to raise their children. We're talking about newcomers in search of a better life. And we're talking about business owners who know that our economy is recovering, but they know that they need predictability to succeed in the future, because this legislation is not only about protecting workers, it is also about providing predictability for those businesses employing minimum-wage workers. These are businesses that create jobs in our economy. If they have predictability so that they can plan for the future, they can be successful and create even more jobs for our communities.

Speaker, we have seen the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and the Retail Council of Canada, among others, applaud the predictability this bill would bring to their businesses. And this is why I urge, again, the support of all members of this Legislature, because this bill is about providing fairness and protection for minimum-wage workers. It also helps create more stable economic conditions for the province.

This legislation is very much a result of a transparent and open process. We knew that the system of adjusting the minimum wage had to change, as I talked about. The case is there as to why we need a better, a new system to set minimum wage in our province. We also recognize that a substantial change had to come by consensus. We had to, as we have done in this case, bring in the business community, the workers, organized labour and the youth. We had to bring everybody together to see if we could build a consensus around how change should be and what kind of change should be brought in.

That's why, Speaker, we took an important step. In last year's budget, the first budget under the leadership of our Premier, we announced that we were going to be creating an advisory panel to consult Ontarians as to how minimum wage should be determined in our province. We made that commitment in the budget. Pursuant to that commitment, last June I had the honour of announcing the panel, and the terms of reference to the panel, giving them the task. Let me talk to you about who was on the panel, because it's very important. We wanted to make sure that the panel is representative of our communities, that the panel is representative of our economy. We worked very hard to have the right balance, to have the right points of view, to have the right set of people as part of the panel, so that we can get advice that represents the point of view of our great province, and of course of all Ontarians.

Hon. Jeff Leal: So, Yasir, who's on that panel? Who was on that panel?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The panel was composed of an independent chair, representatives from business and labour, anti-poverty advocates and youth. The chair, Speaker, of the panel was Dr. Anil Verma, who is a highly respected professor at the University of Toronto. He is a professor of human resource management at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. He is also the director of the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. He serves as a member of Statistics Canada's Advisory Committee on Labour and Income Statistics and on the board of directors of COSTI Immigrant Services, somebody who's very well recognized, experienced, is sought after internationally for his access to expertise around industrial relations, around labour relations; just a perfect person. It was a true honour and delight to work with him as he worked on this very important project on behalf of all Ontarians, and I want to thank Professor Verma for his tireless commitment and dedication to this particular process.

In addition to Dr. Verma, the panel also consisted—I mentioned that we have representatives from business, and from anti-poverty and youth groups. I want to give you the names of individuals who were part of the panel along with Dr. Verma.

So the panel consisted of Antoni Shelton, who is a director and a liaison to the president for the Ontario Federation of Labour. So we wanted to make sure we have a representative from organized labour. Antoni works very closely with Sid Ryan, who is the president for the Ontario Federation of Labour.

We had Adam Vasey, and I'm sure the member from Windsor—Tecumseh will know Adam Vasey, who's the director of Pathway to Potential, which is Windsor-Essex county's poverty reduction strategy, so we had a representative, Mr. Vasey, from the Windsor area, who does a lot of work in poverty reduction.

Gary Rygus is a board member of the Retail Council of Canada, to sort of bring the perspective of small businesses in the retail communities, be it in Peter-

borough or Richmond Hill or Markham or Brampton or Ottawa. These are businesses that keep our local economy running.

We also had Beth Potter, who is the president and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, as part of the panel. Again, tourism is a big part of our economy in our province, from big cities like Toronto to small communities like Kenora, and we wanted to make sure that that point of view is very well represented.

Laura D'Amico was a student trustee for the Ottawa Catholic School Board and a member of the Ottawa Youth Commission and is currently attending Wilfrid Laurier University. I know Laura personally from Ottawa, because she is a really hard-working young person, a thinker, a doer, and it was great to have that youth representation from Ottawa to be part of this panel.

Hon. Jeff Leal: And a friend of Jim Watson, I think, too.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, we all are friends of Mayor Watson, who is doing a great job in our city of Ottawa. We thank him for his public service. I'll let Mayor Watson know that—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Send him the Hansard. He loves to see his name in print.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, as you can see, this was a diverse panel that reflects all sides of this important issue. I want to take this moment to thank them once again for their hard work and dedication.

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Just to give you an idea of the task that I gave them: As I mentioned to you earlier, we appointed the panel in June. In my very first meeting with the panel, I told them very clearly, "You have six months to consult Ontarians, to look at the research on the issue of what's the best way of determining minimum wage, to look at the experiences of other provinces in Canada and jurisdictions beyond Canada and get back to us with a report and recommendations. Six months, period—not a year, not a year and a half. This has to be done fast, this has to be done effectively, because our government is serious to ensure that we raise minimum wage for hard-working Ontarians, but also to provide predictability for businesses who create jobs in our economy." We were very clear. We gave them that task and said, "By December, you have to come back with the report."

They took it on, and I congratulate them. I think they felt that the timelines were a little too tight, but on behalf of our government and on behalf of our Premier, I just wanted to make that very, very clear. It's their efforts that have resulted in this legislation.

They went on to travel the province. They went on in gathering the important data that they needed, the research that needed to be done and analyzed to understand what their recommendations should be. Just so you know, they conducted public consultations across the province and invited written submissions on adjusting the minimum wage. We created a dedicated website: ontario.ca/minimumwagereview. There was a discussion paper that was put on there. We set up a toll-free number

so that people could call in with their comments. They could write emails, they could send written submissions besides the actual consultation so that nobody's left behind. Anybody who wanted to take part in the consultation process had the opportunity to write, to speak, to call in to provide their feedback.

The panel went to 10 different cities across the province, every single region, to make sure that we were available to many places.

Hon. Jeff Leal: What cities did they visit?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: They were in places like Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Toronto, Mississauga. These are just the ones that come top of mind. I think in the north they were in Thunder Bay. I mean, they really did their homework well.

Some 92 organizations and individuals made presentations to the panel. As well, another 340 submissions were delivered through the website, by email, fax, mail and telephone to them. We really wanted to make sure that accessibility was not an issue.

Speaker, as I mentioned, after the consultation deliberations, the panel reached a consensus with the chair, relayed to me in his report. The report is available on the website. I actually encourage everybody to really look at the report. It's a very good read. They have looked at a lot of data. They have presided—it gives you a really good understanding in the report as to who lives on minimum wage in Ontario, who works on minimum wage, what age demographic, what background, where do they come from.

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I love receiving notes from the staff telling me what to do and what not to do. They don't realize that I'm standing here; I can do what I want to. I've got 27 minutes to talk about an important issue. This is a very important issue, and a lot of people have been engaged in this issue. I really want to make sure that we give due time to this very important issue.

In their report, they provided four consensus recommendations. I really stress "consensus," that all the members of the panel that I spoke about, including the chair, agreed on the direction, the advice they wanted to give to the government. Recommendation number one was that the minimum wage in Ontario should be tied to Ontario's consumer price index—in other words, the cost of living. That's the index that should be used.

This number, by the way, as we all know, is available from Statistics Canada. Nobody will doubt the veracity, the authenticity or the kind of work that Statistics Canada does.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought Harper tried to close that down. Is it still going?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: They do good work, given that their wings maybe have been clipped, unfortunately, through the elimination of the long-form census, which is unfortunate, because the better the data, the better the evidence they have, then the better the analysis that we as Canadians receive from them.

Their advice was that minimum wage should be tied to Ontario's consumer price index, or the cost of living,

from the previous year. People will know that it's a determination of the cost of living in terms of how much it costs to buy your regular items or goods that we need to sustain ourselves. It's a good reflection of how costs may be increasing.

Their second recommendation, which is another very important one, is that the minimum wage should be reviewed annually—every year. Their recommendation is four months' notice. We're suggesting six months, to allow for more predictability. They said that it should be revised every year; therefore, an increase on an annual basis.

The third recommendation—again, a consensus recommendation—was that this whole system be reviewed in five years' time.

The last recommendation was that our government should put more focus on collecting all the data around labour statistics, around wages, so that this type of exercise is easier to conduct.

I'm really proud to say that we are incorporating all of those recommendations in the bill. The last one does not need legislation. The very first one—that is, that the minimum wage be tied to Ontario's consumer price index—goes to the heart of Bill 165. The second one, that it be revised every year, is part of this bill, as I explained. With six months' notice, on April 1 of every year, starting in 2015, we will announce the amount, and it will come into effect on October 1, 2015, and on and on it goes. And, lastly, that there be a review of the system every five years is also very much part and parcel of this legislation.

That is, Speaker, the process by which we have arrived here. I would argue to you that it has been a very democratic process, a consultative process. The opposition is very quick to criticize the Premier for having too many consultations, but with effective consultation comes good legislation like what we have in front of us in the form of Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act.

Our job is to listen to Ontarians; our job is to consult them. They have elected us to represent their points of view. There is no shame in going back to our constituents. In fact, I would argue to you, Speaker, that the essence, the job description, of what we do as MPPs is to find ways to consult Ontarians, take their points of view and then put that into effective legislation. That is exactly what we are doing here, through this legislation. The panel did an amazing job, and I'm very happy to see the result of their hard work being represented in this bill.

I'm going to take a few more minutes, Speaker, to make a couple of important points. One is, as I said earlier, I'm disappointed with the official opposition for not supporting raising the minimum wage to \$11. This is their position and, at least, I give them points for being consistent in their position. They did not believe in raising minimum wage when they were in government from 1995 to 2003, they did not support raising minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$10.25, and they don't believe in raising minimum wage to \$11. They're consistent. Nobody can blame them for that. That's their position, and they'll be judged on that.

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However, Speaker, I do want to give them credit for being supportive of this particular legislation on the notion of making sure that we have predictability in the way minimum wage is determined. I have good conversations with the PC labour critic, the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, and I appreciate his desire to bring more predictability to the way minimum wage is determined, because it's going to benefit our businesses, especially our small businesses.

My disappointment is reserved for the NDP, the party that used to claim—they don't anymore, Speaker—to stand up for the little guy. They used to claim to stand up for the vulnerable worker. They are the ones, if I can use the expression, who are MIA on the issue of the minimum wage.

Hon. Jeff Leal: MIA?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: MIA—missing in action—on the issue of minimum wage.

Speaker, don't take my word on it. As I mentioned to you earlier, we announced that we will be setting up an advisory panel on minimum wage in the last budget, a year ago. When the leader of the third party was in active negotiations with our Premier, with our government, on what should be in the budget and what it will take for her to support our budget, did she ever talk about raising the minimum wage in that process? Not at all. Not at all, Speaker. That was not part of her demands whatsoever. We still—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Not the Tea Party, but close to it.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Yes, they are getting close to the Tea Party. It's very unfortunate. The Tea Party doesn't even want them that close to them, but that's what they're striving for.

Speaker, we did still—because we wanted to do the right thing—put in that advisory panel. Then, as I mentioned, eight months ago, we announced the creation of the advisory panel. Did the NDP once submit it to the panel, to provide their position as to how they think minimum wage should be determined, what the amount should be and what formula should be set? Absolutely no. Nothing, Speaker. Nothing.

Let's go further. In this House, did they once ask me or the Premier, even in questions during question period, on the issue of minimum wage? No. You can check the Hansard; you can check the record.

It was almost a month ago when the Premier and I announced our policy position, after the work we received from the panel. We issued the report, and then we announced a few days later that we'll be raising the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, and we will be bringing legislation—as I did, that we were talking about—indexing this to the cost of living.

You would wonder that the NDP would have a response to that. You would wonder that the NDP would come out and say yay or nay or “We're neutral.”

Hon. Jeff Leal: Nothing.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Nothing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Silence.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Silence. Their leader, according to, I think, the Toronto Star, went into the witness protection program. She disappeared. In fact, Speaker, there were two by-elections going on at that time, as you may recall. When asked again and again by the reporters—when the candidate, now the member from Niagara Falls, was asked about his or the leader's position: Silence. No position.

You scratch your head as to how the party who used to argue that they stand for the little guy, the party who always argued somehow that they had the corner on compassion, is the one, all of a sudden, that has no position. The best line they could come up with: “We need to consult with small businesses on this.”

Hon. Jeff Leal: We already consulted with small business.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We already consulted small businesses. We actually had small business as part of our panel. If you would have paid attention to that process and if you would have engaged in that process, you would have had the information that you need to make a decision. But you know what? Absolute silence; it almost took a month for them because they were getting a lot of pressure. You have to just see what's been written out there by the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star and even the Sun. You know, you don't expect them to be writing anything on a progressive issue like minimum wage. Everybody was saying, “Where is the NDP? What do they really believe in? Do they believe in anything whatsoever?” When they came up with a position it felt like we were in an episode of *The Price is Right*; right?

Hon. Jeff Leal: No, it's like Let's Make a Deal.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Or Let's Make a Deal, perhaps.

You know, it's laughable. In fact, I will say to you very honestly that I'm very, very disappointed because the NDP is a party that now believes in corporate tax cuts. The NDP is a party that now joins hands with the Conservatives in voting for a motion that says, “Don't raise corporate taxes.” Can you believe it?

I had constituents call me last night. I had constituents call me yesterday after the vote in this House saying, “Did we see right that the NDP voted with the Conservatives on a motion that says, ‘Don't raise corporate taxes’?” I'm sure everybody knows the Bizarro world, the Bizarro cartoons. Are we living in a Bizarro world? I said to them, “No, it is true. This is exactly what happened.”

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a coalition over there.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Yes, it's a very strange coalition—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I wonder what Tommy Douglas would have thought of that?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Actually, I think it was the Globe and Mail that said in one of their editorials that this is not the NDP of Tommy Douglas and Jack Layton. I'm not making this up. This was in the Globe and Mail.

It's interesting, when you speak with NDP MPPs on these issues and in conversations, their reaction is that they stare at their toes now. They can't even make eye

contact on this issue, which is sad because I think they need to stand up for hard-working Ontarians, like our government is doing.

I am very proud that I am part of a government, under the leadership of our Premier, that has raised minimum wage to \$11 an hour, the highest minimum wage in all of Canada. We have brought in legislation, Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, that will ensure the minimum wage never falls behind and that it will take politics out of how the minimum wage is set, which brings fairness for Ontarians who live on minimum wage and which provides for predictability for businesses that create jobs in our economy, because that is what Ontarians are asking for.

I really urge members from all sides that they stop playing politics with people's wages. Start making sure that we are not making this into a political football. We should not be just pulling numbers out of our hats. We should be working together. We had a process in place that made sure that the views of all Ontarians are considered. That's why I can state here with confidence that Ontarians support the steps that our government is taking. Ontarians support Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. I really hope that all members of this Legislature will support this very important piece of legislation because that will really modernize the way in which we set minimum wage in our province. It is a fair approach. It is a predictable approach and it is a responsible approach. Thank you very much, Speaker, for your time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well in support of this legislation brought forward by the Minister of Labour.

I'm glad to hear that minimum wage workers will be getting a raise and they will be treated fairly. Increasing the minimum wage and making sure it keeps up with the cost of living is important for our workers, important for our businesses and important for our communities. It means more money in people's pockets so they can more fully participate in our economic recovery and it means more of a boost for our local economy.

Ontario is a compassionate society. The legislation before us does just that—it provides protection for some of our most vulnerable workers. We're talking about students working to put themselves through school. We're talking about parents working hard to raise their kids and newcomers searching for a better life. They deserve to know what their wage will be from one year to the next while having an opportunity to improve their lives.

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That has not always been the case. Between 1990 and 2003—for 13 years—we saw the minimum wage increase by less than \$2. That was not fair to workers who saw their cost of living increase dramatically while their wages stayed almost frozen. How could that happen? It happened because the NDP and PC governments chose not to do anything about it. When we came to power we

acted. We raised the minimum wage. I'm proud to say that we have increased the minimum wage by 50% since 2003.

Our government knows that we have to change the mechanism by which the minimum wage goes up. We need to take the politics out of setting the minimum wage; we need to make sure the minimum wage is set fairly and keeps up with the cost of living so workers do not see their hard-earned wages fall behind; and we need to make sure it is set in a transparent and predictable way so that our businesses, especially our small businesses, can plan for the future and continue to create jobs. I'm proud to say that the Fair Minimum Wage Act would achieve both of these things.

The bill brought forward by the Minister of Labour will go a long way towards helping minimum wage earners by providing them with a certain sense of security. If the proposed Fair Minimum Wage Act is passed, then beginning on October 1, 2015, adjustments to the minimum wage would be annual. Any changes to the minimum wage would be announced by April 1, six months prior to the adjustment. Then, on October 1 of each year, beginning in 2015, the minimum wage rates will be adjusted by the percentage changes in the consumer price index. This percentage increase would then be applied to the existing minimum wage. As of June 1 of this year, this general minimum wage will be \$11, which will be the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada.

Minimum wage rates for special classes, such as students under 18, liquor servers, hunting and fishing guides and homeworkers, will be increased by the same percentage. The new minimum wage would be rounded out to the nearest nickel. If the change in the CPI is negative, the minimum wage would not change. With this bill, minimum wage earners will no longer see the buying power of their wages erode.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is not only about helping minimum wage earners, it is also about providing predictability for employers whose businesses create jobs in our economy. It is about making sure businesses, especially small businesses, know what the minimum wage will be so they can plan, stay competitive and continue to create jobs. You cannot run a business if you cannot predict with some accuracy your costs going forward. This bill will provide predictability for these businesses. If the members pass this bill, these businesses would know there is an increase coming on October 1 and they would receive six months' notice of the amount, allowing both workers and businesses time to plan ahead.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act is good legislation and it comes as a result of the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel, which was chaired by Dr. Anil Verma of the University of Toronto. Dr. Verma and the panel, made up of representatives from business, labour, anti-poverty advocates and youth, consulted across the province to get input on how the minimum wage should be adjusted. They heard from a large number of groups and individuals. They looked at the research and evidence and, after

their deliberations, came up with a consensus on how the government should approach adjusting the minimum wage. This was an independent panel, and the recommendations are based on their consultations. The result of their work is the bill we're debating here today.

As I've said, I fully support this legislation. It would help protect the most vulnerable workers and it would provide certainty and predictability to businesses employing them. It is good legislation on both economic and social fronts. I urge all members of this House to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Oh, sorry—

Mr. Rob Leone: He was just fixing his hair.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, okay. You had me confused.

The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll be doing my hour leadoff at some point, whether we start today or another day on this bill.

Of course, we've been clear that the opposition is going to support Bill 165. But we do have an issue, obviously, with the direction that Ontario's economy is going, and I'll talk a bit more about that and, of course, of our leader's plan that's going to be debated today, Tim Hudak's plan to create one million jobs in Ontario. It's a five-point plan.

This is something that we have been urging the government to come forward with, and that's a jobs plan for Ontario. In southwestern Ontario, of course, we've been hard hit, with thousands and thousands of manufacturing jobs being lost. In fact, Ontario has lost 30,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the last 12 months, since Premier Wynne has come to office, working with, as I like to call her, Deputy Premier Horwath.

Our five-point plan, which Tim Hudak's going to talk about today, is very clear. It's going to lower hydro rates for Ontario's families and businesses. It's going to lower taxes and rein in the government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years. We're going to promote the skilled trades and lower apprenticeship ratios; increase trade with provinces across Canada, specifically western Canada and the western Canada partnership; and eliminate the red tape that forces small and medium-size business owners to spend time filling in paperwork instead of hiring more employees. This is a plan to create one million jobs in Ontario, and I urge the House to come together and support Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand in this House and respond to the remarks from the Minister of Labour regarding the introduction of Bill 165, the fair labour act, I believe it's called, about minimum wage. I'm not the labour critic, so I'll leave our party's comments to the labour critic when he does his lead, but there's a few things the minister mentioned that I found rather entertaining.

One is that we were no longer the party of Tommy Douglas. I took a little bit of umbrage to that, because a little bit of history on Tommy Douglas: When he was Premier of Saskatchewan, before he brought medicare to that province and before he brought electricity to the rural routes, to the farms of that province—he brought the electrical infrastructure that really pushed Saskatchewan to the road of modernization. Before he did those two things, he balanced the province's budget, because he knew, and we all know, that for a province to be healthy, we have to spend money wisely.

He also knew, as we know, that people have to have a fair wage. Once again, if you look at our last provincial platform, we were at \$11 then. So it's a bit tough to get lectured from the party across the way on how we are missing in action on this file, when actually we've been pushing on this file for a lot longer. Just because we're not jumping up and down every time a newspaper says something is not much different than actually sitting back and looking at how to develop policies that actually work for the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what a true pleasure it was to hear the speech this morning by my colleague the Minister of Labour, the MPP from the great riding of Ottawa Centre. You know, I've been here for a decade and this is one of the better speeches that I've heard in that decade, where he clearly laid out, in very persuasive terms, why Bill 165 is so needed in the province of Ontario, to take the politics out of the settling of minimum wage. I want to give some credit this morning to a good friend of mine, a lawyer in Peterborough, one Stephen Kylie. Steven is chair of the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network and just a great individual. He's been working for many, many years to reduce poverty within the city of Peterborough. He came to me a number of months ago. He was absolutely ecstatic when the Minister of Labour set up this panel to look at the minimum wage.

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A good friend of mine, a Peterborough boy, Allan O'Dette, who is the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—Allan and I have been great friends. His mother, Rosemary, was a former nurse at St. Joseph's hospital in Peterborough. Allan was certainly very supportive of the very wise approach that the Minister of Labour has taken on what is a very important social file in the province of Ontario—indeed, Mr. Speaker, to help close the gap when it comes to wages in the province of Ontario.

But, Mr. Speaker, I was equally shocked today when I read the newspaper. I understand that there's a building permit that's coming forward in the city of Toronto to extend the Albany Club in Toronto, and they're going to name the new wing after the leader of the NDP to make sure that the Albany Club can now accommodate members of the New Democratic Party, because as my union friends say in Peterborough, they're just now Tories in a hurry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection: How do you follow that?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I don't know if you can follow that. I'm just wondering about the last 10 years of speakers, when this is the best he has ever heard. I don't know; I was hoping for better on the other side.

Anyway, I sat here. It was interesting to hear about them talking about this party being so cozy to Sid Ryan—I guess we've always known that, but we've never really heard them say that—when they created the panel. In fact, we hear that they were listening to the panel, but they actually didn't—I don't know if the panel said something different than the report said, but we never saw anything in the panel that talked about setting the minimum wage at the rate they did. They talked about what this bill is about, but they never did talk about what the rate should be increased to retroactively.

So anyway, what we'd like to really see is this government talking about good-paying jobs. I mean, they're really talking about minimum-wage jobs. They've done a great job with minimum-wage jobs. They've almost tripled the number of people in Ontario on minimum wage since they took over. That's quite a feat. We take it differently over here. We'd rather see reducing that number, getting more people in good-paying jobs, and we're looking for them to support our leader Tim Hudak's private member's bill this afternoon. It has five good points.

I had the benefit of listening to more than 20 different municipalities this week, and their message was clear: We've got to get our costs under control. We just can't dump these costs down to municipalities and walk away and blame them for the property tax increases. Surely, when the waste is going on here, we can come up somewhere with the \$25 million they're cutting from OMPF funding this year—or, you know, their standard practice of negotiating terrific or almost obscene wage increases and then passing it down to the municipalities to find money and pay for it.

It's time that we actually take action in this government. It's not something we're seeing here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you have two minutes for a response.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex; the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane; the member from Peterborough, also the Minister of Rural Affairs; and the member from Stormont-Dundas-South-Glengarry.

Speaker, I'm heartened to hear from the official opposition that they support this bill, and I thank them for their support. I do though—our side does not agree with their right-to-work-for-less type of policies that will bring wages down and that are going to weaken health and safety in our province. We have a fundamental disagreement with them on that very important issue. I just really wanted to highlight that.

Speaker, I want to note very interestingly that we again did not hear from the NDP on this issue as to

whether they support setting a fair minimum wage in our province, whether they support Bill 165 or not. We saw a lot of dancing and singing and humming and hawing from the NDP, again, trying to say, "Oh, we've always been there for the little guy." But, Speaker, this is the beginning of the NDT, the New Democratic Tea Party of Ontario.

I see a lot of nurses in the chamber right now. I want to welcome them and thank them for their incredible service in all our communities. But I can also tell you, Speaker, that the nurses have been asking for a fair minimum wage in our province as well, and this bill, Bill 165, is going to make sure that we take politics out of our minimum wage, that it continues to increase every year according to the cost of living, and that we in our province set a fair and predictable way of determining minimum wage.

I hope that all members will support this very important bill in our Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 165 today. We'll get started for a few minutes anyways, and then we'll continue the debate in the weeks ahead.

Before I get into the debate, I would really like to pay tribute to one of our mayors who is here from my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Mayor David Bolton, who's here from Adelaide Metcalfe. The mayor was joined by hundreds of other municipal representatives from across Ontario in Toronto today for Good Roads and ROMA. I was honoured to host another mayor and some councillors from Brooke-Alvinston at Queen's Park a couple of days ago as well.

Speaker, Bill 165 is An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage, introduced by the Minister of Labour. It's a bill that amends the Employment Standards Act to adjust the minimum wage annually, starting in October 2015, by indexing it to the Ontario consumer price index, CPI. These changes to the minimum wage would be rounded to the nearest five cents, and no adjustment would be made if it would result in a decrease in the minimum wage rate.

The general minimum wage, currently at \$10.25, will be increased to \$11 per hour effective June 1 of this year, but of course the bill specifically deals with adjusting the minimum wage annually starting in October 2015. This is something that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce certainly got behind a while ago.

I will read into the House—and I know the member from Peterborough touched on it; the president, Allan O'Dette, is leading this charge. This is a message from the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and I'd just like to read it into Hansard: "Ontario is in a period of economic transition," and he's absolutely right with that first note, Speaker, because, as I said during my two-minute response to the minister, of course we are in an economic transition. We've lost over 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the last 10

years, and we've lost 30,000 in the last 12 months alone under the Wynne-Horwath arrangement. To continue: "The Ontario Chamber of Commerce and its 60,000 members firmly believe that the policy choices made today will impact our province's competitiveness for generations to come."

On that note, again, I'd like to highlight the fact that later on this afternoon, our leader, Tim Hudak, will be debating his own Million Jobs Act. I think this is a visionary policy and a visionary plan to kick-start Ontario's economy. Right now in Ontario we have nearly a million unemployed men and women. This is why our caucus agreed to clear the decks last September and pass some government bills so that the Premier and the Liberals could table a jobs plan. Speaker, here we are six months later and we have yet to see anything that resembles a jobs plan. Instead, we hear that the Liberals and NDP want to raise taxes on businesses and middle-class families through corporate tax hikes and increasing the gas tax by 10 cents per litre.

You know, I talk to many residents in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, many from Mayor Bolton's municipality of Adelaide Metcalfe, and the people of southwestern Ontario, quite frankly, do not want to pay for Toronto transit. For this Premier to talk about increasing gas taxes by 10 cents a litre is despicable and is most unfair. So I would urge the Premier and, as I said earlier, Deputy Premier Horwath to reverse course. When they're huddled debating whether this budget passes this spring—and I know both parties, by the sounds of it, want to avert going to the people—I hope they take into consideration what we've been saying in the official opposition: that the people in southwestern Ontario, northern Ontario—outside of the GTA—don't want to pay for Toronto transit. That is the last thing that Ontario needs.

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What our province needs is a plan to create jobs and attract businesses to the province. Our leader, the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook, has that plan. In fact, it's being debated later today, and we hope that every member in this House will support it. It's a five-point plan, a common-sense plan, to kick-start Ontario's economy, to create one million well-paying jobs for the people who, this morning, woke up without any hope and without any future.

Tim Hudak's one million jobs plan focuses on five points:

- (1) It lowers hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses.
- (2) It lowers taxes and reins in the government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years.
- (3) It promotes the skilled trades and lowers apprenticeship ratios.
- (4) It increases trade with provinces across Canada.
- (5) It eliminates the red tape that forces small and medium-sized business owners to spend time filling in paperwork instead of hiring more employees.

Back to what the president of the chamber was saying: "The government of Ontario is currently consulting on how to set the minimum wage." This is before the report came out and before the government announced their intentions. The chamber says, "This issue is important. There is broad consensus that the current process—or lack thereof—governing the minimum wage does not work for employers and workers."

Allan O'Dette, the president, continues: "We have consulted widely with our membership through surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Our consultations have revealed that OCC members want a process for setting the minimum wage that is based on four principles:

"Predictability"—and this is a part that our party supports, when it comes to Bill 165—"Employers want a process that provides predictability so that they can plan, grow and invest with confidence.

"Transparency: Employers need a process that is open and depoliticized.

"Fairness: Employers also want a process that considers the impact on both employers and workers.

"Promotes Ontario's competitiveness: Employers are job creators. Decisions around minimum wage should not discourage investment, job creation and economic growth.

"As such, we"—the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—"recommend that the minimum wage be pegged to the consumer price index (inflation). Of the options considered, this approach is most consistent with all four principles outlined above.

"We also urge members of the panel to consider the impacts that significant and one-off hikes in the minimum wage have on businesses and employment. For many employers—particularly those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors—a decision to 'make up for lost time' would exacerbate the challenges they face and hinder Ontario's economic recovery."

Clearly, Speaker, the Minister of Labour, the Premier and the government did not take into consideration, when they went back retroactively to hike the minimum wage, what the impact of that was going to be on retail, hospitality and the leisure sectors.

Again, Allan O'Dette, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said, "A decision to 'make up for lost time' would exacerbate the challenges they face and hinder Ontario's economic recovery." I think that was a warning in advance, and clearly, the provincial Liberal government didn't take into account what the Ontario Chamber of Commerce was saying.

In my riding, before I was elected, I had the honour of serving as the president of the Strathroy and District Chamber of Commerce. I'd been involved for a number of years there. Also, I made a point, as soon as I was elected, back in October 2011, to reach out to our chambers in the riding. I speak regularly with the Grand Bend and Area Chamber of Commerce and, of course, Wallaceburg and District Chamber of Commerce as well.

It will be no surprise to any member in this House that small businesses are concerned about this, specifically about the retroactive pay increase.

Allan O'Dette continues, saying that the Ontario chamber is pleased to submit their views on this matter and they look forward to participating in the continued discussion.

The consensus recommendation from the Ontario chamber was clear: "Once every two years, on July 1, the minimum wage should be adjusted based on the cumulative change to the previous two calendar years' All Items CPI for Ontario." So the government did some variation of this.

The OCC did a lot of work on this, and I'll give credit to Allan O'Dette and his team at the Ontario chamber. They are really working hard. They put out a bold plan—I forget the name of it now, but it really sets out a bold path, and I think that our leader's Million Jobs Act adopts a lot of the visionary principles that the chamber set out.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yesterday, Speaker, I wanted to raise this point of order, but the House adjourned too quickly. It was my colleague's 61st birthday yesterday—my good friend Garfield Dunlop, and I wanted to wish him a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My dear friend, who was elected in the same year as me.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm with you, buddy.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to guess that there's going to be an outpouring of love this morning for registered nurses. I'm guessing that.

I just want to recognize a registered nurse from my riding: my good friend Denise Wood. Welcome to Queen's Park. Welcome, RNAO.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome our page Ibrahim Oleiche's parents today. They would be Fida and Zein Oleiche. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: On behalf of the Premier, the Minister of Health and all our colleagues here in the Legislature, today I would like to introduce several members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario joining us here at Queen's Park: Doris Grinspun, Rhonda Seidman-Carlson, Pat Sevean, Janet Hunt, Carol Timmings, Mary McAllister, Claudette Holloway, Una Ferguson and Jackie Graham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure to have with us this morning some good friends of my father-in-law, John Ryan: Mr. Wilf Kemp; his lovely daughter, Belinda Kemp, and Belinda's daughters, Avery Moorhouse and Celia Moorhouse. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les infirmiers de l'Association des infirmières et infirmiers autorisés de l'Ontario.

It certainly is my pleasure to welcome everybody from RNAO. More particularly, I'd like to mention that Maureen Cava is here, and Aric Rankin, Paula Manuel, Jody Macdonald and Deborah Kane. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce a number of people in the members' east gallery today: Mary Anna Zakula, who is the mother of page Nik Skilton, from Peterborough; and grandmother Christian Walker and grandfather Harold Walker. I want to give them a big, warm Queen's Park welcome here this morning.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce, from the RNAO, Jill Staples, an RN from my riding. Jill, give us a wave up there. Thank you very much, and welcome to Queen's Park. She always comes and represents the RNAO, so I thank her for that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, just with a special edge to this, I'd like to welcome the registered nurses. I live with a registered nurse and I owe my political success to his patience and his skills.

I know how hard you work. You're a blessing on this province. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This is a great day at Queen's Park, to have so many members of the RNAO join us. I'd like to make a few more introductions. I'd like to welcome Vanessa Burkoski, Denise Wood, Marianne Cochrane, Véronique Boscart and Rebecca Harbridge. Welcome to all of our guests.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We're pleased to welcome in the east gallery today the Honourable Diana McQueen, Minister of Energy for the great province of Alberta, and her chief of staff, Riley Georgsen. They are here at Queen's Park to participate in the Canadian Energy Innovation Summit.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: It's my pleasure today to introduce some residents from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. First, I'd like to introduce Justin Brown. Justin Brown was the chief of staff to Bob Runciman when he was here, so it's nice to have Justin back with us. Justin is with his daughter, Rowan. Rowan is down here, I think, to get some information on the page program. Rowan, welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome the nurses from Hamilton. I don't have their names in front of me, but there are four or five of them, I believe, from the Hamilton area. I welcome them to the Legislature today.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today I'd like to introduce some individuals who are here representing the Atypical Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome Canada: Sonia De Bartoli,

Michael and Margrite Eygenraam and Christopher Lee. Thank you for being with us here today at Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My page from Burlington is doing a wonderful job and is very hard-working. Her mom and brother are here today in the public gallery, Diane and Zach Caton.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce two registered nurses from Welland here today: Shirley Kennedy and Elizabeth Stifter.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce my friend Michele Farrugia. Mikey, stand up so we can see. Mikey's visiting us from Oshawa today. I'd welcome him to his first session of question period.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome nurses from eastern Ontario. We have Suzanne Lynch-Braithwaite joining us with the RNAO, Kassia Blattner and, from the great nursing program at Loyalist College, Elizabeth Edwards. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to have Candies Kotchapaw, who is a student in our office, here observing what we do.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to welcome the students of Don Mills Collegiate Institute here to the Legislature today, one of the best schools in this entire province.

I'd also like to introduce attendees from the Children's Breakfast Club who are joining us here today: Richard Gosling, Zubeda Nanji, Cecilie Homer and Alexandra Fraser. Joining them from 33 division are Sergeant Rod Chung, PC Patrick Thompson, PC Timothy Whittle and PC Dale Swift. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce RNAO nurse Megan Herron. She carries awhile in Tara, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Welcome, Megan, and welcome RNAO.

Hon. Mario Sergio: From the heart of the riding of York West, I'd like to welcome to the House Shoreham Public Sports and Wellness Academy. They are joining us today. I'd like to say welcome and enjoy the day here.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature Cheryl Yost and Jane Foster here with the RNAO. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you Brenda Jenkins and her nephew Henry, who are here today joining us at Queen's Park for some information. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I had a very engaging breakfast this morning with nurse practitioner Alana Halfpenny, from Lambton; and registered nurse Betty Oldershaw, from the great riding of Chatham-Kent.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'd like to welcome to the House Zehavi Zynoberg from my riding of Thornhill, whose name means "gold" in Hebrew. He has such a sunny disposition that it suits him.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just in case there's anyone in the House who hasn't been introduced, I'd like to welcome them all here this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe I've got everybody in. That used to be my line from a long time ago, so thank you for stealing my thunder.

The Minister of Northern Development and Mines on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the House know that my mother passed away recently. I do want to take this opportunity to thank all of them for their very, very kind and thoughtful condolences. This is a very important time for our family. In that regard, actually, I do want to introduce two of my sisters who are here with us this morning. Of course, I love them dearly: my sister Susan Houghton and my sister Sarah Mackenzie-Gravelle. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I too would like to thank all the members for their generosity of being good human beings in this place. From time to time, we all share and come together for very important moments. These are those types of moments. I appreciate all the members for their expression of solicitude and gratitude to each other. They represent their families, and I appreciate that deeply. I thank you and compliment all the members on that.

I also would offer my thanks to all of our RNAO visitors for being here. In case you got missed, we welcome all of you here.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, you know, sadly, something historic happened today. We heard from the OPP commissioner regarding the criminal investigation of the OPP into the Premier's office and the Liberal Party. The unfortunate consequence of the fact that you're being criminally investigated, not once but twice, means that you're spending a lot of resources, quite frankly, protecting the Liberal Party instead of creating jobs for people in the province of Ontario. Basically, because of these scandals involving criminal activity, you don't have the focus on getting our economy moving again and creating jobs. You're spending time covering Liberal hides rather than creating jobs for our province. So, given you're so consumed by the OPP investigations, I've got a jobs plan to put people back to work. Will you support my million jobs plan, debated in the Legislative Assembly later this afternoon?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. While the clock is stopped, I'm going to remind all members: I do not want to hear individual names. We know that that's not appropriate. The convention here is that you either say their title or their riding, and I'll stick tight to that. That includes the sidebars.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, on this side of the House, we're able to manage

many files concurrently. We're able to stimulate the economy and grow our economy and create those jobs. And we put up with some of the nonsense that comes from that side of the House in regard to some of the investigations that they purport to tell. The OPP commissioner told us today, "I am told by our investigators that the OPP is receiving good co-operation from senior government officials in this matter." They have our full co-operation. They further say that the Premier has been very responsible. We've taken a stand. She's actually called for the investigations, and we're moving forward. But, Mr. Speaker, I recall, as someone who was involved with protecting the communities, the member opposite stood in that community and promised to cancel that power plant without consequences any further. Mr. Speaker, they just do the same—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me be clear: The OPP stormed into the Premier's office, not anybody else's. Let's be clear about that. So the Minister of Finance assures us that they can handle both, that they can spend half their time on OPP criminal investigations and then half their time on the economy. Minister, I just wish you had made the right decisions so you could focus 100% of your time on creating jobs in our province.

Look, you yourself were involved in these decisions. You're finance minister. You asked for billions of dollars to be spent to save Liberal seats, including your own. You supported the Green Energy Act that has now seen hydro rates more than double in the province of Ontario. Part of my million jobs plan is to end the unaffordable subsidies to wind and solar. It's causing job losses. For every short-term job we create putting up a wind turbine, we'll lose four in the broader economy. So let me ask you directly—you're the Minister of Finance—before you signed on—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —to these unaffordable wind and solar subsidies, did you look at how many jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So the member opposite has what we refer to as the "killing million jobs act." This is about a job loss plan. This is his plan, Mr. Speaker, very thin on specifics.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have a plan, a plan that has created jobs, over 600,000 jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not get things quiet for the member from Renfrew to get his heckle in.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't see you get up, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie will come to order.

Finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's plan for right-to-work is about killing jobs. It's about killing prominent jobs in our community, and it's not forward thinking. He's going backwards in time, Mr. Speaker, and you can't compete in that regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, with that kind of sophomoric response, no wonder we can't attract jobs to the province, Minister. I expect better from the finance minister of the province.

Part of leadership is imagining the future you want for the next generation, one full of jobs, good-paying jobs, and then you build the steps to get there. I've done that plan, and I'm ready to lead us there, to get taxes down, to get energy rates under control, to make sure we make the decisions necessary to balance our books, including an across-the-board wage freeze that you used to support but you cast aside, putting us deep in debt.

You hear the same thing I do; I know you do. Every business owner I talk to, large or small, is concerned about skyrocketing hydro rates. You know that your subsidies to wind and solar have been an economic failure. My question for you is, why are you going to dig the hole deeper? Why not embrace my plan for affordable energy so we can create jobs again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, we talk about sophomoric and simplistic plans brought forward by this man and this party.

We are the leanest government in Canada. The steps that we have taken—we are the lowest per capita government anywhere in Canada. For four years running, we have controlled our spending. We have been very disciplined, and we're the only government to have actually cut spending year over year. We're taking the steps necessary to meet our targets and balance our books by 2017-18.

But this is what they say about Mr. Hudak's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard very little talking while the question was being put; I'm hearing too much talking while the answer is being put. Stop it.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is what they say about this risky and radical plan that goes back in time: "Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak's latest economic offering is a simplistic, headline-hunting plan that's more concerned with austerity than job creation. And it ignores many of the most important drivers of economic growth," said by Michael Warren in the Toronto Star.

He often quotes Don Drummond, and this is what he has to say: "It's extremely unlikely to produce many

jobs. A few calculations should have made that evident," said Don Drummond.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister. I'm just somewhat incredulous that the finance minister would describe his government as a lean government. I mean, how in the world can you say that a government with the biggest deficit in Canada and the most indebted jurisdiction of states and provinces in North America is lean? I think we need a new finance minister; I think we need a new government. I think we've got to get on a much better track.

The minister obviously wants to continue to embrace the Dalton McGuinty approach of expensive energy, so let me try a different tack that's part of my jobs plan. At least Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan finally came around to an across-the-board wage freeze, legislated if necessary. That was my plan; it's part of my million jobs plan. So to help us get out of the deep debt, will you support my bill, which will bring in an across-the-board wage freeze to make sure we have less debt and attract investment to our province?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are the lowest-cost government in Canada. We have, because of the controls and the measures we've taken, taken necessary steps to control our spending, but we've been very strategic in stimulating economic growth. That's why we've created over 164% more jobs in this province, in this jurisdiction, compared to anywhere else—compared to the United States that's only at 80%. So we're taking those steps.

Mr. Speaker, the man opposite is proposing a bill that's going to create cuts in our economy, especially now that we have a sensitive recovery. His plan is going to reduce nurses, reduce doctors, cut teachers and eliminate very valuable jobs in our communities.

We are still the top destination for foreign direct investment. They will be cautioned because of the work that this man is proposing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Minister, respectfully, the first path to recovery in Ontario is admitting that you've got a problem. You've put us deep in debt. You've increased taxes. You've increased energy rates almost twofold. I've seen the commercials by the RNAO. You're actually the party that's laying off nurses in the province of Ontario, so let's get our facts straight on this.

So you're not going to rein in spending; you're not going to stop the energy increase. Let me ask you this: The man who seems to be calling the shots is not you, but it's Pat Dillon of the Working Families coalition. They brought in a new bureaucracy called the College of Trades, and now you want to have compulsory certification for carpenters. You'll reduce jobs there.

Look, my plan is to create 250,000 jobs in the skilled trades, to take aside this bureaucracy that stands in the way, to move to a one-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio. I want a bright future for people in good, middle-

class jobs in the trades. Will you support that, or are you stuck in the past and deep in Pat Dillon's pocket?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister of Finance?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: The opposition is putting their heads in the sand. They are stuck in the past. They want to go back to the glory days of smokestacks burned on coal and compete with assembly lines. That is not where we're going to be competitive in the future. We know that we have new manufacturing. We have more sectors created in Ontario than any other province combined. We've got more start-ups in this province because of the initiatives that we've taken. The man opposite is suggesting that we provide right-to-work legislation that would cut those jobs. He wants to lower wages as opposed to provide those value added.

We're investing in people. We're investing in education. We're providing youth programs so that we get more young people employed so that they have the skills necessary to compete in the new economy of the future, of tomorrow. He still wants to go back to yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, I understand you were a significant player in the Dalton McGuinty government. You're convinced that you want to continue down that path. You are stuck in the past. I've got a bold, fresh plan to put people back to work in good middle-class jobs in our province. I call it the million jobs plan; it's debated this afternoon.

Here's the difference, Minister: You choose expensive wind and solar subsidies; I choose affordable energy so we can hire again. You choose 300,000 more government jobs; I choose a million good jobs in the private sector that put people back to work in our province. You choose higher taxes; I choose lower taxes that will invest in Ontario and create jobs again. You chose to double the debt; I'm calling for the debt to come down and say Ontario is open for business again. You're choosing Dalton McGuinty; I'm choosing the people of the province of Ontario, who want hope and want to get back to work in our great province. Why don't you?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have to collaborate with all levels of government for the benefit of the people of Ontario. The individual across the way is suggesting that we do across-the-board cuts and not stimulate economic growth. There's time for restraint, there is time for us to control our spending, and we've already employed many measures of austerity for the benefit of providing valuable services at lower cost. That's why we are the lowest-per-capita-cost government in the country.

But this member opposite is now suggesting that what we need to do, to create job losses that he's proposing in his act, would be to eliminate these costs and eliminate the investments that are necessary to promote economic growth. The measure of our economy is GDP. What

we're trying to do is increase our GDP, and that has increased over time. We are going to do everything necessary to grow our economy, not slow it down, as this member is suggesting we should do.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, the OPP commissioner testified about the serious charges they're investigating concerning the destruction of documents in the Premier's and other government offices.

Can the Acting Premier tell us whether any staff or members of the government caucus are subjects of this investigation?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to correct the record here. The OPP commissioner appeared in front of the committee this morning and confirmed the following: He confirmed that there's ongoing work by the police force. He confirmed that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

Hon. John Milloy:—those involved are co-operating fully. He also confirmed that we should allow the police to do their work and to draw no conclusions.

Mr. Speaker, I would advise all honourable members of the House that we should listen to his advice and, as is the tradition of this place, allow the police to do their work, to not speculate and certainly to not interfere. I would hope that the leader of the third party would take that advice to heart.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The House leader can downplay it as much as he wants, but this is a serious matter. This is a criminal investigation, which is another thing that was confirmed this morning at committee. There could be some heavy sentences that come as a result of these investigations.

Given the seriousness of this matter and the government's stated commitment to transparency, will the Acting Premier commit today that anyone who is subject to this investigation will be asked to step aside pending its results?

Hon. John Milloy: This line of questioning really is beneath the leader of the New Democratic Party. We have a situation where the police are undertaking work and, as is the tradition of this Legislature, we should get out of the way. We should allow them to undertake their work. We should not draw any conclusions. We should not speculate.

If the honourable member wants to talk about the gas plants, then perhaps she and the members of the opposition could talk about their position going into the last election and the fact that they had the exact same position as the government. They're hoping that fact gets forgotten, but I'm sorry to say, it's not going to be forgotten. All parties in this Legislature opposed the two gas plants

and all parties would have taken the exact same action, had they been in government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The House leader's fancy footwork is a disservice to the public of this province. The police have an important job to do here, but the government actually has a responsibility to the public. When someone is under investigation, they have to step aside. I'm asking the Acting Premier to make that basic commitment today: Either confirm that no members of the government caucus are the subject of this investigation or tell us they'll be stepping aside if they are. Will the Acting Premier make that commitment?

Hon. John Milloy: Just to repeat—and I believe the finance minister made the point clear—that when the commissioner appeared in front of the committee this morning, one of the things he stressed repeatedly was the full co-operation that he is receiving from the government. When inquiries are being made, there are no roadblocks or obstacles—I believe he used words to that effect—when they're undertaking their work.

Again, I would advise the leader of the third party that she accept the traditions of this House. They're there for a very good reason. We allow our law enforcement agencies to do their work in an unencumbered way. I also think it's doing a disservice to this Legislature to try to draw any conclusions, to try to speculate. Let's allow them to undertake their work.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Finance, but I think the Minister of Government Services and House leader needs to remember that there's a tradition in this House to step aside when you're under criminal investigation in the province of Ontario.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier whether the Liberals will keep the promises that they actually ran on in 2011. She proudly threw the 2011 platform under the bus, saying she wasn't the Premier then and she's the Premier now.

Can the minister list which promises from the 2011 platform the Liberal government will be keeping and which ones they're throwing under the bus?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the fact the leader of the third party recognizes that we have a platform; they do not. We are going to continue doing what's best in the interests of the people of Ontario. We're going to continue stimulating economic growth. We're going to continue investing in job creation measures, like our youth programs. We're going to continue combatting the excessive costs, as I believe both parties recognize is important around reducing auto insurance rates, for example. We're taking the steps necessary to maintain a very dynamic business climate that attracts those investments into our province.

We're going to invest in transit. I'm not certain where they stand on that component, but we need to invest in

those modern infrastructure projects that are going to create a very competitive environment in our province and pay huge dividends in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the Minister of Finance knows something we all don't know, if he's got a platform ready to go.

People have been let down a lot of times over the last 10 years by this Liberal government. They have a hard time trusting Liberal promises and it doesn't help when the Premier makes contradictory promises. The government starts throwing out parts of the platform that they were elected on.

Now, can the minister explain to Ontarians whether the Liberals will keep their campaign promises from last time to hold the line on taxes or whether they'll keep their new promise to raise taxes on families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm not certain where the member opposite is coming from now, because what we're saying is that we're going to invest in those initiatives that are going to stimulate economic growth. We're investing \$35 billion over the next three years to promote infrastructure so that we take care of the issues that created an uncompetitive environment over many years of rule by another party. We need to invest in those initiatives.

When we talk about maintaining a dynamic business climate, we are the party that actually cut taxes from 5.5% to 4.5% for small business. We introduced an accelerated capital cost allowance to enable those businesses to be competitive. We actually eliminated taxes for 90% of businesses in this province by eliminating the employer health tax. We're taking those steps. We've created over 164% more jobs in this province than ever before.

So we are being competitive, and the reason is that we have a dynamic climate in Ontario.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The last time that families had a say, they voted for a government promising not to make their lives more expensive with new taxes, tolls and fees. The Premier likes to say that this is a new government, but anyone looking across the aisle today can see it's the same old Liberals.

Does the minister really expect people to buy the idea that this isn't the McGuinty Liberal team, that the Premier wasn't the co-chair of the McGuinty Liberal campaign and therefore doesn't have to abide by the promises everyone on that side of the House made during the last election campaign?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have introduced an increase to the minimum wage. The party opposite was silent throughout the entire process. They make reference in their platform, but they didn't even discuss it during that time that we needed some deliberation.

The third party has also not even discussed what is critical for the well-being of Ontarians in the future, and

that's retirement security. No mention about this pension reform that is so important for our future.

We are taking those steps. We're taking leadership on those initiatives to protect the interests of Ontarians, both young and old.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Minister, this morning Heinz announced that Highbury Canco will be taking over a portion of their Leamington plant as a co-packer, saving many jobs in town. This announcement is great news for the people of the town, and it's a good start, but there's plenty more work to be done in Leamington. I want to ensure that the province continues to make Leamington a priority. The town is still at a net loss of hundreds of jobs, and I will continue to work with Leamington mayor John Paterson, trying to bring new jobs to the community.

Minister, what are your next steps to help those in Leamington whose jobs won't be saved?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I will remind the members on this side that I've been hearing a few people mentioning people's names, and it will stop—last warning.

The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud to say this morning that there is a great announcement coming out of Leamington. I'm not sure if the member opposite is supportive or not, from his question.

We're bringing back literally hundreds of jobs to that important community. I'm so proud at the announcement this morning by the Heinz Co. and Highbury Canco that they're investing in that community. The facility will stay open. Heinz has signed a letter of intent with this company, this good Canadian company, to bring hundreds of jobs back to that community and for them to continue as a contractor, producing food and food products for the Heinz Co.

This is great news for the Leamington area. I want to commend, quite frankly, the mayor, Mayor Paterson; the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation, who have been working very hard on this; certainly, the member from Windsor West, Teresa Piruzza; and all of the members in government, the officials, who have been working so hard to make this work. This is a great day for Leamington.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Just for the record, these jobs were created by the private sector, not by this Liberal government.

Chatham-Kent has lost over 10,000 jobs since this Liberal government took power in 2003. Heinz, McKesson and Worthington Cylinders are just a few of the latest to either shut their doors or reduce the size of their operations.

I'm going to tell you something, Minister: My riding knows how to turn this challenge into new opportunities, but this government is not doing enough to help. Employers should not have to pay high energy rates or struggle with red tape.

The good news is that the PC Party has a plan ready to kick-start our economy. Your government and the NDP are talking job creation. You know what? You can help us. Minister, help us help you. Will you do the right thing and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order.

Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am shocked at this response, and I think the member opposite should just say, "Thank you." Private sector jobs are exactly what this province needs. He should talk to Mayor Paterson and understand from him and others the important role that this government played to make that private sector deal happen. In fact, we did our due diligence with the investor that has the agreement with Heinz right now. We introduced that company to Heinz and worked with them on an almost daily basis to make sure that opportunity and any other private sector opportunities could come to fruition.

We're so proud, again, that hundreds of jobs are coming back to Leamington. If the member opposite doesn't like that, I think he should move elsewhere.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am prepared to say something but I'm not going to do it until everyone's listening. I've said many times in this House I don't like it when individuals are attacked and I will not tolerate it. We're more honourable than that.

New question.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. Home care is a vital health service that more and more Ontarians rely on, but as questions continue to grow about CCACs, about health care dollars being diverted from front-line care to executive pay, we know that our home care system is falling short. Nurses, some of them here with us today, have spoken out; patients have spoken out, and problems just continue to grow. Why then, after years of promises, has the government yet again failed to fix our home care system?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I appreciate the concern that we need to continue transforming and delivering good health care in our province. I congratulate the nurses who are here today who do a tremendous job on the front lines for our communities.

We have taken a number of steps to promote greater health care in home care. We recognize the work that CCACs are doing. We also recognize that we need to ensure that more attention and more support goes to the front lines so that we can deliver the health care where it's needed and when it's needed, and that's exactly what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The first step to fix a problem is to admit that you have one. The NDP is giving this government an opportunity to finally take steps to fix the problems in home care. I have given the Clerk a motion for a legislative review of the community care access system, outlining a process that would allow us to immediately and publicly look at CCACs, look at their executive compensation and identify what needs to change, what needs to be done so that home care can be fixed.

My question is simple. Will the government support an immediate and public review of CCACs?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I know the Minister of Health commented on this yesterday. We're more than open and welcome to further investigations. We have always taken that step to be more transparent in the work that is being done by CCACs and throughout the system. In fact, we're going to be introducing legislation in regard to capping executive salaries, recognizing the dichotomy that exists between the very high and those on the front lines. We're taking those steps as well, so I welcome the input.

I do look forward to knowing what the third party has in store for this. We already know what the opposition wants to do: They want to cut your jobs. We're not going to do that. We do want to work. We want to continue to invest and provide support for health care and for the front lines, so I welcome your suggestions in that regard.

1110

DISASTER RELIEF

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On December 22 and through Christmas, municipalities across the greater Toronto and Hamilton region were affected by an ice storm that caused great damage, leading to about 830,000 people and customers losing power. Our Premier, our government, our members were out working with affected municipalities, helping constituents all across the GTHA.

Now, the fallen tree branches are being picked up. The warming centres have closed. The streets are salted and cleared. However, our municipal partners have expenses that they incurred from the storm. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, could you please explain how our government plans to support the recovery from this event?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for this very important question. Since the ice storm, 32 municipalities have passed resolutions asking our government for assistance in helping to pay for the ice storm's

cleanup. In January, I was able to meet with the GTA mayors and regional chairs in Mississauga and hear their concerns, and have, frankly, a very constructive conversation.

After evaluating their submissions, yesterday I announced that our government will provide up to \$190 million to support affected municipalities through a one-time special ice storm disaster relief fund.

As a former municipal councillor myself, I know how important and critical the role is of the municipal government and the role that they play in disaster management. I want to thank them for their work. Our government knows that this storm had a significant impact on municipal budgets and I'm proud that our government will provide critical relief, whether through this needed assistance or the approximately \$3.2 billion that we provided in uploads last year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank the minister for the answer. I'm pleased that our government will continue to work with municipalities on ensuring they receive the support that they need to recover from the ice storm. However, as our government has increased support for municipalities, the federal government continues to fail to give Ontarians its fair share of federal transfers, disadvantaging Ontario cities and towns, as well as every Ontario citizen.

Ontario has been experiencing more severe weather, like the ice storm and the flooding that occurred in the GTHA region over the summer. Municipalities from across Ontario are looking to disaster mitigation to ensure that Ontarians' property and lives are protected.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister please explain to the House what action she has taken to ensure that the federal government works with our government and municipalities to ensure that we are able to cope with this extreme weather?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As climate change occurs, events like this summer's flooding or this winter's ice storm will occur more frequently, and these problems are not just ones that affect Toronto, the Muskokas or Sault Ste. Marie. It's a nationwide issue. It's one the federal government continues to ignore. That's why following the ice storm I wrote to my counterpart, the Honourable Steven Blaney, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Because these events occur, municipalities rightly need to begin to look at how to mitigate their effects, whether it's through the redevelopment of storm water management systems or making our hydro system more resilient.

I appreciate the federal government's recent commitment to national disaster mitigation, but I fear it will not go far enough and Ontario will not receive its fair share. Ontario and the whole country need essential investments to address the priorities of Canadian municipalities. That's why I'm urging all parties in this House to stand with our government and pressure the federal government to come to the table and discuss how we can best mitigate the effects of these disasters.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The hard-working people in my riding of Thornhill paid their fair share of transit taxes and would like this Liberal government to do its fair share. Instead of giving families in Thornhill the transit that they need and want, this Liberal government continues to waste tax dollars on scandals, and is moving forward with a \$640-million east-west bus lane plan that doesn't properly address the needs of people in my community.

Speaker, the hard-working people of Thornhill want to know if the Minister of Transportation will abandon his ill-thought-out transit plan and commit today to building the Yonge subway expansion.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to welcome the member to our House and tell her, not having been around here that long myself, and sitting up about where she is, I'm very honoured to get your first question, and I'm very glad. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: She'd be honoured if you'd give the answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's also nice, Mr. Speaker, to know that she has better manners than some of her colleagues.

The Yonge Street extension is in the Big Move plan. It is a \$50-billion plan. We are about \$17 billion into it. Mr. Speaker, 90% of that money has come from the province of Ontario. In her area of York region, we did a partnership on development charges, so they've been extending it. You can see the commitment in our partnership with Vaughan and the city of Toronto on the subway that is now in its final stages of completion. So I'd be confident that our track record is there. I look forward to working with her to realize that project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the Minister of Transportation: Minister, for a decade under this Liberal government, residents of York region have been asking for the expansion of the Yonge subway, not just talk about it. They need it to service Thornhill, Markham, Richmond Hill, Unionville, Aurora and Newmarket. But instead of getting the infrastructure that the residents of Thornhill need, they continue to send their hard-earned tax dollars to this Liberal government, watching them spend it on everything from Ornge to eHealth and the gas plant scandals.

Minister, why do you insist on reaching into taxpayers' pockets to pay for all of your waste and scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would actually invite the member—because I'll go on a tour with you, if you'd like, of the initiatives that we have.

Mr. Speaker, we have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll do.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that's it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There is \$1.4 billion in GO service. The GO–Viva partnership is connecting these subway lines and our GO Transit so there will be an east-west connective piece. It's a very successful project, highly integrated transit. We have accelerated and increased the number of GO stations, building parking lots and more, and providing bicycle facilities, as well as the subway, this subway extension and others—there are a number of projects. The priorities are being set in partnership with the regional governments and the municipalities, so we think they're very reflective of that.

I really would invite her to a tour. I'd love to spend some time with you, and I welcome you again to the House.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the respected hydro watchdog, AMPCO, released its annual comparison of industrial hydro rates in North America. Once again, Ontario had by far the highest rates of industrial users of any comparable jurisdictions: \$94 per megawatt hour compared to \$56 per megawatt hour in New York state and a very low \$32 in the US industrial Midwest, which competes with Ontario for good-paying manufacturing jobs. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in the Niagara region and southwestern Ontario because of this government's high hydro rate policies. How does this government justify its job-killing hydro rate policy to the people of Niagara and southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As we know, we've invested \$31 billion in the sector in the last 10 years because the system had been left to deteriorate. That put pressure on prices. We all know that. We therefore created a number of mitigation programs to help individual customers as well as industrial customers.

Mr. Speaker, the member may not be aware of the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, which we started about 18 months ago. This uses surplus power to give discounted power to our own industrial customers. Last month, we announced some of the people who had been successful in that program. Detour Gold was one of the successful proponents in the first round, and they issued a press release claiming that the program will save them \$20 million this year.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: As if the present industrial hydro rates weren't bad enough, the government's own long-term energy plan calls for a 30% increase in the industrial hydro price by 2018. This is going to result in the loss of thousands more good-paying jobs.

How does this government justify a 30% increase in what are already by far the highest industrial hydro rates in North America?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have a plan for the electricity system. The 20-year plan projects cost increases annually of 2.8%, which is better than most other provinces.

That party, the third party, has no policy on energy. They will not plan new nuclear. They are against refurbishment. That represents over 50% of our generation, and here's their policy. They have no policy on replacing 50% of our energy. How will it be produced? Nothing. They stand up and criticize, and they close their eyes to the very significant mitigation programs we have to help our industries in Ontario.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Our priority as a government is our economic plan to invest in people, to invest in infrastructure and to create the right business climate for job creation. We've had great success so far. Employment across the province is up by 440,000 jobs from the recessionary low of June 2009. Just last year, employment rose by 95,000 jobs.

Speaking with constituents, neighbours and friends across Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, they constantly agree with me that jobs and the economy are a priority for them and should be a priority for our government.

Our government has made tremendous strides throughout the province through our regional economic development funds. Could the minister please provide an update to the House on the funds and how they're creating jobs across this province, including in eastern Ontario and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for this question. Just this past October, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, a fund that was actually modelled after the Eastern Ontario Development Fund that's been around for nearly five years. Through these, we've committed as a government over \$100 million to these two regions in regional economic development, but, importantly, leveraging a total private sector investment of \$980 million, almost a billion dollars.

These investments are helping to create and retain, so far, over 24,000 jobs in Ontario communities, jobs that are a direct result of this government's initiative to help companies invest in employment. Of these jobs, 95% of them are manufacturing jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for sharing with this House the great work that our government is doing to help create jobs and grow the economy. Our province's success relies on working together with all sectors to spur growth and create good-paying jobs at home.

From my own experience in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I know that the Eastern Ontario Development Fund has created and retained jobs in and around my riding. They have included new jobs in the agri-food, aerospace and construction sectors. Dart Aerospace in

Hawkesbury, Holder Tractors in Embrun, Beau's beer in Vankleek Hill and Alexandria Moulding in my hometown of Alexandria are just a few examples.

Speaker, through you, could the minister inform the House of specific investments we're making in communities across the province to get the economy moving and provide employment for Ontarians?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This government has created the conditions for companies to thrive here in Ontario. We have a competitive tax rate and a labour force that is one of the best-qualified in the world.

Recently, I attended an announcement of Original Foods in Dunnville, in southwestern Ontario, who are expanding their operations to hire 150 people out of that important community. We also supported a company called Pillar5 Pharma in Arnprior. Through our investment, our partnership with them, the company is adding 56 new jobs and retaining 94 more. In the member's riding, we partnered with Dart Aerospace in Hawkesbury, creating new manufacturing jobs for local families.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the official opposition, who voted against and did not support in any way whatsoever these two important regional economic development funds—we believe it's important to consider industry as important partners in supporting the growth of our economy, and we will be there to support them when they need that support.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. My constituent Shay Nakhdjavan was placed on a wait-list for residential care at the age of 14. She is now 34 years old—20 years on a wait-list.

Shay suffers from multiple health conditions, including epilepsy and seizure disorder; Dravet syndrome, a severe brain disorder related to epilepsy; cognitive delay; autism; diabetes; and obesity. She has behavioural problems that often result in seizures and self-inflicted injury.

Her aging parents have done what they can over the last 20 years to look after her. They now have their own health issues. For years, specialists have recommended 24/7 residential care. I trust the minister will agree that 20 years on a wait-list is not only unconscionable, it is immoral.

I'm asking the minister today: Will you intervene on behalf of Shay and her parents and ensure that her care is looked after through resources in your ministry?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I thank the honourable member opposite for his question. He's a champion of people with developmental challenges and the families that support them, and he was kind enough to bring this particular situation to my attention.

He knows I can't comment directly on the case—it would be against the law to do that—but I can say here that we're aware that some individuals have very complex needs that make it very challenging to find a place-

ment. It's the responsibility of Developmental Services Ontario and community agencies to work together as best they can with families to explore possible solutions. It's my job to make sure that that's done as effectively as possible, and I believe, on the whole, it is.

That said, I need to note, of course—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —it's helpful that the extra \$42.5 million we invested this year is bringing more developmental services to the fore and some—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I did bring this matter to the minister's attention and I can't tell you how disappointed I am in the response. What I was hoping to hear from the minister was that, given the fact that his own ministry has agreed to put this woman on a priority list, and she has been there for years, he would ensure that his own ministry's priority would be honoured.

Here's what's happening: Shay is being put on a priority list. Residential providers are skipping her in favour of other patients who don't require the same complexity of care. I call that discrimination. What should be happening is that his ministry should be honouring its own recognition of Shay's condition.

I'm asking the minister one more time: Rather than giving me platitudes and generalities, will he commit to work with me to ensure that Shay and her family are looked after?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Without the extra comments, please.

Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to continue working with the member opposite. I appreciate his advocacy, truly. In fact, I appreciate the advocacy of all the folks in this House who work together to support, as I did, the creation of the developmental services special committee. That's important work.

In the meantime, let me make it clear: We need to focus, I think, on four objectives: expanding direct funding; supporting people better in key life situations; responding to people who have urgent support needs—I agree with the member opposite—and broader options for residential supports.

We know, for example, that improving housing options is critical. That's why we created, upon the advice of our partnership table, an Inter-Ministerial Housing Task Force to recommend a broader set of options.

We look forward to working together—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —with all members of the House, and I await with breathless—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time's up.

New question.

1130

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. Earlier this week, a media exposé forced the government to finally fund the nine empty beds at St. Joseph's Health Care's newly built forensic hospital. These beds were desperately needed to treat mentally ill offenders who are found not criminally responsible in the place where they should be treated: a health care setting instead of a jail.

Today, Londoners are learning more about the impact of the funding cuts to St. Joseph's Health Care that were announced this week. Just as they funded the empty forensic beds, will the Acting Premier commit to Londoners that his government will address the new problems that are sure to arise as St. Joseph's Health Care deals with the loss of funding?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. I'm proud that our government has provided the necessary supports to build the state-of-the-art Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care, which was completed in June 2013. It's important that we continue to provide the services for the individuals that are affected, and I recognize, especially for those with developmental services needs and with mental health issues, that we need to find the proper support systems for them. So we'll continue to do that. But since 2003-04, the number of forensic mental health beds has increased by 42%, from 556 to 789. We're doing what's necessary and will continue to take those recommendations under consideration, as we must, for the benefit of the people of Ontario and those that are affected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Acting Premier: Last week, we learned that a health care CEO in London received a 144% pay increase. Today, we learned that St. Joseph's Health Care in London will be cutting 23 positions, including eight nurses in the sexual assault, surgical recovery and acquired brain injury programs, among others.

We know that cuts to nursing care directly impact the health of patients. A study released yesterday provided clear proof that increasing RN workloads resulted in higher death rates for patients. It was further reported, Acting Premier, that Ontario has the second-lowest registered-nurse-to-person ratio.

Will the Acting Premier tell us whether his government will intervene this time around, or will cuts to patient care be allowed to continue?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have made a number of investments to transform the way we deliver health care. We are the party and the government that has increased the number of nurses in this province. We've added more than 20,500 nurses in Ontario since taking office, and that's more than 4,000 new nurses in 2013. In addition, the number of nurses who are now working full-time has increased by 50%.

We recognize how important it is to have front-line health care. We know what is necessary. The member opposite cites probably a transformation of nurses from one site to another. The net result is more nurses in our province. We know how valuable the work is that you do and what you do for us, and we will continue to invest in that. We know that we need to make those transformations for the benefit of health care and we've got to find better ways of delivering that health care in a more fiscally responsible manner. It's not enough just to do across-the-board cuts that would sacrifice the needs of the community and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. It is good news that Ontario is up 440,000 net new jobs since the recession began. However, there are still people out of work even though the unemployment rate is moving steadily downward.

But I remain concerned for our youth. The youth unemployment rate continues to be double the overall rate. Young constituents in Ajax-Pickering, as recently as last night, have told me how challenging it can be to land that first job and to get real work experience. Whether they are out of high school or the post-secondary level, young people need opportunities. We must engage employers in this solution as well.

Can the minister advise this House what this government is doing to help young people get that job experience opportunity?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. I also want to thank him for his many, many years of service and as a champion of youth in the Ajax-Pickering community. We all know that he has done a lot of work in that area.

Ensuring that our young people have opportunities in our economy is a top priority for our government. One of our key initiatives is to create job opportunities for youth, and we're doing that through our youth employment fund. The program offers young people an opportunity to gain some real work experience and learn work skills while earning an income.

The youth employment fund was set up to help 25,000 young people over the next two years. I'm very pleased to announce that in less than six months, as of Friday, this fund has already created 7,934 job experiences for young people right across this province, something we're very, very proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It was really good to hear that the youth employment fund has helped so many young men and women find employment, and it's great that the minister mentioned that this fund is also helping youth facing greater barriers to employment.

It sounds to me like this program has been very successful and I can see where it may be working in big

cities like Toronto, but I'd like to know how successful it has been in the rest of the province. Youth in rural and mid-sized urban communities face some of the greatest barriers to employment,^t and I want to know what we're doing, whatever we can, as a government, to help them, too, especially ensuring that the success of this program is going to reach them.

Can the minister please advise me and others on the success of this program outside the large urban areas of Toronto?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The youth employment fund is serving youth right across this province. Since September, we've created 1,899 job experiences in the west, 1,278 in the east and 969 jobs in the north. This means that this program is reaching out right across the province of Ontario.

Last month, I travelled across the province talking to youth and thanking our front-line service providers and local businesses for making this program the success that it is. I had an opportunity to meet a young man in Oshawa with a great name—his name was Brad—who, after years of unsteady work, secured a job at Durham Pallet Services through the youth employment fund. This is what he had to say: "I love my job and I love learning new things. The youth employment fund allows Durham Pallet to invest in me and cross-train me in other areas of business, and allows me to learn at my own pace."

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, two weeks ago, I wrote you a letter regarding the lack of road maintenance service in my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. Sadly, yet not surprisingly, I have not had a response. Stretches of the 401 in my riding have been unplowed for over 24 hours in some cases, which is three times longer than it is supposed to take in order to clear a class 1 highway.

Minister, your government has cut the number of plows on the road in my riding from 17 down to nine, and the number of salt and sand stations from four to two. For up to two years my colleagues and I have shown you areas where you and your government can save money without cutting services. You decide to cut funding to road maintenance and now my constituents are paying the price.

Minister, when will you be increasing the resources for road maintenance services in my riding, and will you commit to not cutting these services next year?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I listened very carefully yesterday to the honourable member's comments about the accidents on the 401, about which he and I share a great concern. The difference is that I actually waited until the OPP report came out before I commented. He was saying

that it was bad plowing that caused the problem; the OPP reports that the roads were perfectly fine and that it was a fog condition. Maybe the members opposite can control acts of God, but—so that road was in good condition.

The member opposite may want to look at his own party's platform, because the reason that there are changes in the assignment of trucks and vehicles is because we, as a government, no longer decide how many vehicles there are. The contracts that they put in place when they laid off 3,000 people in the Ministry of Transportation allowed the contractors to decide to do that, so he can talk to the contractor. We will be changing some of those contracts, so this problem no longer exists.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But you also—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Minister, the 401 in my riding is not being kept safe. This needs to change before someone loses their life due to your reckless cuts to service. Just yesterday, as you alluded to, the subpar road conditions were responsible for yet another wreck along the 401, just east of Cobourg. This one forced the highway to remain closed for most of the day, costing millions of dollars in productivity to this economy. This is all because you wanted to save \$800,000 in cutting services. Only in the world of Liberal economics would this be considered a good business deal.

Your government has wasted billions on eHealth, gas plant scandals, expense accounts to Pan Am executives and a cushy severance payout to Chris Mazza, and now you decide to try and save money by reducing the scope of services that protect the lives of millions of Ontario drivers. Minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: —when will your priorities return—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is a member of a very respected profession; he's a teacher. Last time I looked, they taught civics and history, and they teach kids how to read and do research. So I assume before he decided to become a member for the party opposite, he would have actually looked at what their record is. Because prior to him presenting himself as a candidate, your party in government had laid off 3,000 staff in the MTO. Those staff were the people who actually did the plowing in your area. You decided, as a government, to introduce performance-based contracts, and that allowed contractors to use as much equipment and as many staff as they do. So if you would like to change that, as I would, I hope you'll support the reforms I will be bringing forward to restore the system before you lay 3,000 people off.

CHILD CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education. Speaker, we learned tragic news this morning. Another child, a baby boy, has died in an unlicensed day care. We know almost nothing about him, except that he should be alive today. Instead, his parents are devastated, and parents right across this province have another reason to worry about their children's safety. One death is too many; four deaths in less than a year is a crisis for families in this province. The minister's bill will do nothing to ensure that we have enough inspectors to keep kids safe, and her ministry will still be in the dark about unlicensed day cares that are operating. She's also increased the size of groups and staff ratios, meaning younger kids will receive less care.

Speaker, did her ministry know about this location, and how many families will have to be failed before this government gets it right?

Hon. Liz Sandals: My heart does go out to the family, who are absolutely devastated by the loss of their little four-month-old boy. In this particular case, Speaker, my ministry was informed on February 18 that there had been a death at a home on the preceding Friday, February 14. When my staff investigated, they discovered that this was, in fact, an unlicensed home child care. My staff have done a preliminary review of the records, and in fact there were no complaints about this particular facility, ever. So there is no reason that the inspectors would have gone there, because there have never been any prior complaints. It is my understanding that the police continue to investigate, as they do all deaths of young children, as are my officials.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Let me make a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just want to remind all the members of the House that the Prospectors and Developers Association conference begins this coming Sunday. Twenty-five thousand delegates from all around the world are coming to look at the great investment climate of the province of Ontario. There is an Ontario government reception you've all been invited to this coming Sunday, 5:30 at the Steam Whistle. We would love to have you there and the opening, of course, of the Ontario pavilion on Monday afternoon at 1 o'clock. We welcome you all there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is quite a long list, so hunker down: Vince Savoia, executive director, Tema Conter Memorial Trust—these are not all in the House, but they will be coming; Allan Rewak, Pathway Group; Jim Christie, president of the OPPA; Chris Hoffman, director and president, Ontario Provincial Police Association;

Thomas Kaudelka, president, Ontario Provincial Police Association; Lee McBain, president, Ontario Provincial Police Association; Terri Hilborn, Police Association of Ontario; Wayne Omardeen, president of the Peel Regional Police Association; Todd Sepkowski, president of the York Regional Police Association; Paul Atkinson, Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; Geoff MacBride, president of the Toronto Paramedic Association; Laura Bell, Unifor paramedics; Gord Mathers, Unifor paramedics; Steve Olsen, Unifor; Corey Vermey, Unifor; Charles Telky, Unifor; Mike Chad, Unifor; Emily Visser, OPSEU; Laurie Miller, OPSEU; Jason Bready, OPSEU; Jeff Van Pelt, CUPE Ambulance Committee of Ontario; Andrew Phillips, CUPE; Corey Nagelesian, CUPE; Mike Merriman, CUPE; Annik Allard, CUPE; Terry Lear; Tammy Clarke; Shannon Bertrand; Bruce Kruger, OPP; Jeffrey Balch, Barrie firefighters' association; David Whitley, York EMS paramedic; Mike Abbott, Toronto Police Association; Lynn Kruger; Joe Gajcevic from OPPA; Ron Smith, Unifor; Benoit Williams, OPPA; Cameron Ritchie, Hamilton fire; Dave Hewitt, CUPE 416.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is that all?

Introduction of guests?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm very proud to introduce a good crew of our Hamilton paramedics who are here with us today, and I'd like to name them: Jamie Ramage, Mario Posteraro, Brad Thomson, Jaime Heikoop, Mark Thomas, Kevin Redman, Dan Fleury, Peter Morgan, Edward Harris, Adriana Baker, Tony Filice and Craig McCleary. Speaker, we're very proud of the work they do.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to grade 5 students from École élémentaire catholique Saint-Jean in Aurora and their teachers.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I forgot somebody very important. My son, Damien, is here with his girlfriend, Raki.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you left the best for last. You don't say you forgot.

Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MEMBER FOR NEWMARKET-AURORA

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Skywatchers know that an aurora is an electromagnetic event, a natural showstopper that makes us sit up and take notice, so maybe it's fitting that the member from Newmarket-Aurora, Mr. Frank Klees, is also known for his magnetism and his ability to command our attention.

It is rare to encounter a great public speaker who also has a sharp investigative mind. It is rarer, Speaker, to find such an individual with a sense of humour as well developed as his sense of style. That rarity will be more obvious when he leaves this place at the next provincial election.

Colin Powell once said, "The day the soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you stopped

leading....” The confidence and trust that Frank’s constituents have placed in him time and time again speaks volumes of his leadership as MPP. In particular, his work on the Ornge file has been an inspiration to us all.

Frank, thank you for the dedication, guidance and friendship that you have provided to me during my time at Queen’s Park. You will leave this place as you arrived: full of class, dignity and a true sense of duty to those you represent. You will not be forgotten or easily replaced.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In a little over a week, we will be celebrating International Women’s Day and recognizing the achievements of exceptional women and girls who are making a difference in their communities and the world.

In partnership with Scadding Court Community Centre, my office will honour such women from Trinity–Spadina who have been nominated by the community. One such woman is Angela Bischoff, who was recognized by *Now Magazine* in 2013 as Toronto’s best activist for her work with the Ontario Clean Air Alliance as well as environmental initiatives such as the Toronto Atmospheric Fund.

Shaunna Bruton has been an outstanding volunteer for organizations like the Equal Pay Coalition and the Canadian Centre for Diversity.

Krista Fry leads a community kitchen program where she welcomes women who are homeless and teaches cooking skills.

Robin Linton is a volunteer with the Cross-Cultural Community Services Association and has donated hundreds of hours of her time to organizing activities and workshops for girls and women, as well as seniors in long-term care.

Yin Shen is another active volunteer with the Cross-Cultural Community Services Association, where she promotes multiculturalism and diversity by organizing activities and workshops to help youth develop self-esteem, leadership qualities and a sense of identity.

Women like Angela, Shaunna, Krista, Robin and Yin, and many others, engage, mobilize and inspire the Trinity–Spadina community. I am grateful for the contributions of these women and look forward to recognizing them and other exceptional women next week.

MOHAMOUD ABDULLE

Mr. John Fraser: I rise today to pay tribute to Mohamoud Abdulle, a member of my community of Ottawa South.

Mohamoud was a humble and hard-working man who dedicated his life to helping his community and those in need. He spent 11 years at the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa, where he helped young people find jobs and get prepared for the workforce and for life. He started a homework club at Ridgemont High School. He was a constant support to the members of Ottawa’s Somali

community. His work touched the lives of hundreds of young people.

Mohamoud believed strongly in giving back, which is what led him to return to his home country, Somalia. It was there, while serving the Prime Minister, that he lost his life in an attack.

What people will remember most about Mohamoud is that he was a joyful person whose face always bore a smile and who always had time to listen.

To his wife, Awrala Nur, to his children, to his family, to the community for whom he worked so tirelessly, to all those whose lives were touched by this tremendous man, on behalf of the people of Ottawa South, I want to extend my sincerest condolences.

In honour of Mohamoud Abdulle, I’d like to suggest that all of us take a moment out, whether it is now, later this evening or this weekend, to think about that kind of service and what people like Mohamoud mean to our community and how we can honour those people in our actions.

SID McLEAN

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to wish a very happy 90th birthday to a constituent of mine, Mr. Sid McLean of Petrolia, Ontario. Mr. McLean will celebrate his birthday on Sunday, March 2. He was born in beautiful Oakdale, Ontario, in the late spring of 1924.

In 1941, Sid enlisted and became a Canadian artillery gunner. He was part of Canada’s greatest generation. Underage, Sid lied about his age in order to join the forces and go over to England. He had to behave himself, he said, so he wouldn’t get caught and shipped back.

Sid later served in both the 4th Light Ack-Ack Regiment, 62nd Battery; and the 5th Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment, 3rd Battery.

Between 1941 and 1945, Sid and his regiment would see action in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Sid served for five years in World War II before returning to Lambton county to begin a long career at Imperial Oil.

Just a few years ago, I had the opportunity to travel with Mr. McLean and members of the 1st Hussars to Juno Beach and other European battle sites to commemorate the service and sacrifice made by brave Canadians like Sid to the Allied war effort. It was an experience I’ll never forget.

Sid is a regular viewer of the Ontario legislative television network and a big fan of question period and the Legislative Assembly debates that take place in this place. I know Sid is watching today, so on behalf of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and the province of Ontario, I want to say happy birthday to Mr. Sid McLean, 90 years young on Sunday.

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to recognize the important work being done at the Centre for International

Governance Innovation in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo.

1310

Since its founding in 2001 by Canadian philanthropist Jim Balsillie, CIGI has become a leading research organization in Canada and internationally, with important contributions to policy debates on global economy and global security issues.

I would like to congratulate CIGI, its researchers and staff, on the recent launch of two exciting new initiatives: the International Law Research Program and the Global Commission on Internet Governance.

CIGI's new international law program will be based at CIGI's award-winning Waterloo campus. Through partnerships and collaborations with Ontario universities, it will provide great dividends to Ontario and the development of our knowledge economy. CIGI's program will focus on intellectual property law; international economic, financial and investment law; regulation and governance; and environmental law and treaties. It will attract leading minds in the field of international law by providing up to 19 fellowships for exceptional researchers and legal practitioners, and up to 20 scholarships for promising graduate students.

Congratulations, CIGI, on these exciting initiatives. Our community and province look forward to the insightful research you will publish on international law, your findings on the future of Internet governance, and the contributions both will make to the province of Ontario. It's a wonderful contribution to the entire Waterloo region.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Ms. Dipika Damerla: On Sunday, February 23, the grounds at Queen's Park were a sea of people who had come out in solidarity with the people back in Ukraine struggling for freedom. It was a bittersweet moment—sweet, because Mr. Yanukovich had been ousted; sad, because of the close to 100 lives that had been tragically lost in the latest struggle for democracy and freedom in Ukraine.

The crowd had come out to pay their respects to those who had died, and the chants of, “Heroes live forever” rang through the cold air on the grounds of Queen's Park. The recent events in Ukraine have been a powerful reminder of the power of people. What is going on in Ukraine is indeed an inspiration to anyone, anywhere, who is fighting for freedom. I stand here and salute the great people of Ukraine.

Closer to home here in Canada, Canadians of Ukrainian descent have, from the very beginning, stood in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. It's a heartfelt and poignant reminder to Ukrainians that they are not alone. Now the Canadian government and governments around the world must do the same. We must ensure that we stand with Ukraine in this historic time, and work for a free and united Ukraine. That is the best tribute the world can pay to those who gave up their lives for freedom.

That is when the words, “Heroes live forever,” will truly ring true. Slava Ukraini.

RAIL SAFETY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last summer's train derailment and subsequent explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec was a previously unimaginable human tragedy which cost 47 people their lives. It was also a wake-up call for all of us that rail safety in Canada cannot be taken for granted.

Knowing we must be more vigilant on rail safety, I am compelled to inform the Minister of Transportation of a safety issue in Wellington-Halton Hills that he cannot ignore and must address. Within the township of Guelph/Eramosa, there is an intersection of a provincial highway and a county road, Highway 7 and Wellington County Road 29. Running very closely parallel to Highway 7, just north of this intersection, is a busy rail line, which I believe is part of the Goderich-Exeter Railway. The rail line is so close to the road intersection that a tractor-trailer stopping at the signal lights, in some cases, can actually have its trailer straddling the rail tracks. If you think about that, just for a minute, Mr. Speaker—a tractor-trailer stopped at a traffic light, straddling a rail line—you would conclude that this intersection is inherently unsafe.

Last month, at this intersection, a freight train actually collided with a transport truck, which was stopped at the lights. The driver was taken to hospital with minor injuries and, thank God, no one was killed.

I call upon the Minister of Transportation to take immediate steps to avert another accident, which, I'm afraid to say, is just waiting to happen. I urge him to instruct his staff to do an immediate safety study of the intersection of Highway 7 and Wellington County Road 29, with a view to ensuring that this intersection, so close to the rail line, is made safe for the travelling public.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It was great, last weekend, as nationalism swept this country. We saw the dramatic and magnificent conclusion to the 22nd Olympic Winter Games in Sochi. The collective pride in our great nation always reaches an apex at times like this in sport, and it was a wonderful thing for us all to be able to see.

Our province of Ontario sent 63 athletes to compete on the world stage. They competed in 93 of the 98 events. These 63 individuals helped form the largest Canadian contingent that we've ever sent to a winter Olympics. Most notable for me are the three Olympians—three gold medallists—from my town of Oakville: Kirsten Wall, who was part of the women's curling team; Brianne Jenner, who was part of the women's hockey team; and of course, John Tavares, who was part of the men's hockey team and got injured partway through.

As we look back at the success of our Olympic athletes, we have the privilege of looking forward to another tournament featuring the best Canada and Ontario have

to offer. Greg Westlake, another proud resident of Oakville, will be competing for gold in the Canadian sledge hockey team in the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games.

On behalf of the people of Oakville, Ontario and Canada, congratulations to all who competed. Thank you for representing us and making us all so proud as Canadians.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Rod Jackson: I spent a lot of time, as did a lot of people in this chamber recently, in Niagara Falls and had the privilege of talking to many of the hard-working citizens there. Unfortunately, these conversations in many cases disturbed me, because the people of Niagara Falls are worried about their future and, quite simply, they have good reason to be.

It's no secret that Niagara Falls is hurting: 40% of all the 300,000 good manufacturing jobs that have been lost in Ontario come from Niagara Falls. From the closing of the John Deere plant to the shutting down of the Bick's plant, to Jarvis Street Pharma—the list is endless, it seems—there's no doubt that unless something changes quickly, the bedrock of Niagara's economy will crumble.

This all comes at a time when families in Niagara Falls cannot afford any more job loss. At 8.8%, its rate of unemployment is already the highest in the province and indeed one of the highest in the country. There's no sign that things will change. After all, the government's own energy plans call for a 30% increase in hydro prices over the next four years, which will only serve to drive thousands more jobs out of Ontario. Years of Liberal government policies have failed this community, and it's obvious that Niagara Falls needs bold change.

Unfortunately, Niagara Falls has a new member whose party seems intent on maintaining the status quo. Every chance they get, instead of standing up for job creation, they choose to stand by a government whose policies represent simply more of the same.

Niagara Falls cannot wait any longer for smart policies that will bring back stable, good-paying jobs. The people of Niagara need hope—hope they can get back to work. This can only happen if the New Democratic Party decides to stand up and have the courage to do what's right, standing up against this unelected government's job-killing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: A point of order: I'd like to put on the record the name of two Olympians from my riding of Durham. One was Tara Watchorn, and she scored the first goal for the Canadian women's hockey team; as well as Matt Morison. I'd like to make a proper statement next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. You're introducing a guest, I suspect.

I thank all members for their statements.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 78, 79, 80, 82 and 83 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to acknowledge February as Black History Month. This month is an important celebration of the accomplishments and the history of black Canadians.

The black community is diverse. Many can trace their origins back to places like Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and many other places.

As February comes to a close, I'd like to reflect on some of the people I had an opportunity to meet over the last month and some of the great work they're doing to strengthen the black community and also Ontario.

Last Saturday, I participated in the Markham African Caribbean Association discussion panel on leadership. I also attended the African Canadian Achievement Awards ceremony. Members of these organizations embody what it means to be an active citizen. They are improving the quality of life of our province for generations to come.

The history of blacks in Ontario mirrors the history of our country. It is primarily a story of strength and triumph. Our history begins much further back than people may think.

Mathieu Da Costa, a black man from Africa, was a translator on a ship that arrived at what we now call Canada with Samuel de Champlain in the early 1600s.

We know that Canada was a sanctuary for slaves during the 18th and 19th centuries. It's the birthplace of some of the greatest role models. The first living person to be awarded honorary Canadian citizenship—someone this world recently lost—was the late Nelson Mandela.

Mandela embodied the spirit of what we celebrate during this month. He was a man who fought for his nation and, after 27 years, rose above his struggles and succeeded to create peace, progress and change not only for black South Africans but for all South Africans and—I'll even go further: for everyone on this planet. He was a symbol of what was right and fair.

In Ontario, we have many black leaders who have also stood for the fairness that we value here in the province of Ontario: Heroes whose activism led this province to outlaw discrimination in the workplace; heroes who continue to work in their daily lives against discrimination in many forms; and heroes like Leonard Braithwaite, who is credited with the introduction of female pages in this very Legislature and is credited with the end of the Ontario segregated school act, which terminated racially segregated schools in Ontario.

Our community is strong because of people like Mary Anne Chambers, someone who has dedicated her life to enabling others; and other people like Alvin Curling, who entered into new territory, becoming the first black cabinet minister here in Ontario and Speaker of this House.

Other black Ontarians like Jean Augustine, who in 1985 put forward a motion to create Black History Month; Herb Carnegie; the late Lincoln Alexander; and Mary Ann Shadd have all demonstrated what it means to challenge the status quo and achieve greatness. These achievements attest to the rich tradition of leadership and activism in the black community.

Diversity is our greatest strength. Today, more than 60% of black Canadians live here in Ontario. We welcome immigrants from around the globe, immigrants who come with skills, knowledge and a desire to put their abilities to good use in this province.

Each of them is drawn to Ontario by the search for success, opportunity and fairness. Immigrants know that Ontario is a place where we have the right to be free from discrimination and we are protected from it. Any man or woman of any race, any gender, religious belief or sexual orientation can come here to Ontario and find success.

These are the qualities that define us as Ontarians, but this identity did not form overnight. It took years of activism and engagement to make Ontario the progressive place that it is today.

So to commemorate this month, let us all celebrate the contributions made by black Ontarians from our past, recognize the role models of today, and look forward to the great heroes who are helping build the strong, fair and prosperous society of the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

ASSISTANCE TO ATHLETES

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity.

I'm thrilled to congratulate all of our athletes who brought their best to the world stage at the 22nd Olympic Winter Games in Sochi.

Sixty-three Ontario athletes represented Canada at the 2014 Sochi Winter Games. These Ontario athletes were a part of the largest Canadian team ever to be sent to a Winter Olympics.

Thirty-four Ontario athletes reached the highest level of their sport by securing a spot on the Olympic podium for Team Canada. Most of these talented athletes are

funded by our Quest for Gold program—athletes such as Dara Howell from Huntsville, who won the gold medal in the ski slopestyle event, and Kirsten Wall from Milton, who is one of the five women on the gold-medal-winning curling team.

Brad Jacobs, Ryan Fry, E.J. Harnden and Ryan Harnden from Sault Ste. Marie and Caleb Flaxey from Caledon won the gold medal in men's curling.

Heather Moysie is one of the two members of the gold-medal-winning bobsled team.

Ten of the 21 athletes on the gold-medal-winning women's hockey team include Meghan Agosta-Marciano, Rebecca Johnston, Laura Fortino, Jennifer Wakefield, Gillian Apps, Jayna Hefford, Brianne Jenner, Haley Irwin, Natalie Spooner and Tara Watchorn.

Nine of the 25 athletes on the gold-medal-winning men's hockey team are from Ontario, including Mike Smith, Drew Doughty, Alex Pietrangelo, P.K. Subban, Matt Duchene, John Tavares, Corey Perry, Rick Nash and Jeff Carter.

Patrick Chan from Ottawa won the silver medal in men's figure skating.

Tessa Virtue from London and Scott Moir from Ilderton won the silver medal for ice dance.

Seven of the nine athletes on the silver-medal-winning figure skating team are from Ontario, including Patrick Chan, Scott Moir, Tessa Virtue, Meagan Duhamel, Eric Radford, Dylan Moscovitch and Kirsten Moore-Towers.

Our Canadian athletes who are showcasing what they are capable of not only fill us with nationalistic pride and joy, but also unite us as a people, as a country.

The games are a unique and rewarding experience of a lifetime that will certainly create long-lasting memories for our athletes. Having the world come together in peace and harmony in one place to perform the best in sport is a truly special event.

While Sunday's closing ceremonies marked the end of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, we look forward with great excitement to watching Ontario's top para-athletes compete at the Paralympic Winter Games. Starting March 7, 21 para-athletes from Ontario will represent Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize our talented Ontario para-athletes who have trained so hard to proudly represent their country on the world stage. On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to wish them all the best of luck at the 11th Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, and we eagerly await their safe return with many, many medals and accomplishments.

Speaker, I'm pleased that the province's Quest for Gold program has played an important role in supporting our athletes in their pursuit of athletic excellence. Since 2006, Quest for Gold has provided Ontario athletes and coaches with approximately \$80 million in support. Ontario's direct financial investment in our athletes through Quest for Gold means that our athletes can access enhanced coaching and training and more opportunities to compete.

Programs like Quest for Gold provide vital support to Ontario's high-performance athletes so that they have access to all of the tools they need to succeed at the highest levels of competition, including the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Of the 84 Team Canada athletes who won medals at the 22nd Olympic Winter Games, 34 are Ontario athletes. Most of them are Quest for Gold recipients.

The great achievements of Ontario's athletes and para-athletes at international competitions such as the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will inspire our summer athletes, who will compete with some of the best in the world right here at home in the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games. We are working to provide our athletes and para-athletes with the best possible chances of success.

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The Pan Am and Parapan Am Games will be an opportunity to showcase our province to an international audience of 250,000 visitors and 10,000 athletes and coaches.

In addition to the economic benefits that the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games will bring to Ontario, hosting the games has leveraged an investment in sports infrastructure that will provide a legacy of world-class facilities. These are facilities where our amateur athletes can train and compete, and where Ontarians will have access to improved community facilities for generations to come.

The 2015 games will unite Canadians in our appreciation for sport and in celebrating the performances of Canadian athletes.

Mr. Speaker, supporting high-performance athletes is a priority for this government.

Our athletes are remarkable role models who inspire pride among us all. Through their pursuit of athletic excellence, they have demonstrated that they are all champions.

I hope everyone will join me in offering congratulations to all of our Olympians and in wishing our Paralympians the best of luck at Sochi.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Hon. Mario Sergio: The Seniors Community Grant Program is the first grant program in Ontario dedicated solely to seniors. It was introduced to give seniors more opportunities to participate in their communities by providing funding to non-profit community groups for projects that encourage greater social inclusion, volunteerism and community engagement for seniors. Applications will be accepted between February 21, 2014, and June 30, 2014. Projects must be completed by March 31, 2015.

Speaker, senior citizens have made a lifetime of contributions to this country, this province and the communities we live in today. Strong community and family relationships lead to a high quality of life for many Ontarians, especially seniors. Reduced social contact, or social isolation, has been associated with a reduced

quality of life for seniors. Social isolation has also been associated with a number of negative outcomes, such as poor health and depression.

Today, I would like to bring to the attention of the Legislature what the government of Ontario is doing to help seniors stay connected to their community.

Ontarians are living longer, healthier lives than ever before. Ontario's landscape is changing as a result of an aging population. Ontario is currently home to approximately two million people over the age of 65. Over the next two decades, the number of seniors in North America is projected to more than double. In fact, by 2036, Ontario is projected to be home to nearly 4.2 million seniors. We don't have to go that far; by 2016-17, we are going to have more people over the age of 65 than young people under the age of 14.

Everyone in this Legislature knows that seniors have much to offer. Senior citizens play an active and important role in our province's communities and economy. We know that growing old does not mean losing our place in society; it does not mean that we can no longer contribute.

Speaker, our government remains committed to keeping seniors connected to their community. This past November, I was pleased to join Premier Wynne in introducing the Seniors Community Grant Program, the first program of its kind in Ontario dedicated solely to seniors. The program will give seniors more opportunities to participate in their communities by providing funding to not-for-profit community groups for projects that encourage greater social inclusion, volunteerism and community engagement for seniors. Again, applications will be accepted between February 21, 2014, and June 30, 2014, and the projects must be completed by March 31, 2015.

I want to encourage all the members of this Legislature to think about organizations in their community and to encourage them to apply. We will be looking for initiatives and projects in the not-for-profit sector to encourage greater social inclusion, volunteerism, education and community engagement for seniors across our province. The grants will range from \$500 to \$10,000 each.

The Seniors Community Grant Program is part of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. Through the action plan for seniors, our government is addressing the challenges and opportunities of an aging population.

We launched the Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide to help seniors stay connected to their community by creating physical and social environments that support independent and active living.

This January, I was pleased to join the Alzheimer Society of Ontario to announce an expansion to the Finding Your Way program. Through the Finding Your Way program, the first of its kind in Canada, we are helping people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and their caregivers who live at home. The materials were originally released in English, French, Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi. This year, we made the materials

available in three additional languages: Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. This program will also help families and caregivers and people who may encounter someone with dementia to recognize and reduce the risk of people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia from going missing.

Speaker, we introduced the first provincial protections for seniors living in Ontario's retirement homes. Regulations brought into force on January 1 outline new requirements, including mandatory insurance, emergency funds and a complaints process for the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority.

Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors builds upon a solid foundation of work that has already been done. We launched the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. For the first time in Ontario's history, the care provided to retirement home residents is regulated under provincial legislation. And we launched the Aging at Home Strategy to make it easier for seniors to live independently, and for as long as possible.

Our government remains committed to improving the quality of life for seniors and families across our province. Speaker, we want Ontario seniors to remain healthy and independent for as long as possible and to feel safe and supported. My goal and my personal commitment is to get it right, and I know I will have the support and wisdom of the people here in the Legislature to help me do just that.

Speaker, I thank you for your time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm honoured to rise today and speak on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to recognize Black History Month.

The month of February is set aside as Black History Month to remind us of the struggles of African-Canadians for fair treatment and equal opportunity. It's also a chance to celebrate the achievements of the black community. Throughout Black History Month, we reflect on the history of those slaves who escaped the oppression of slavery and on the freedom found for over 30,000 slaves by way of the Underground Railroad.

Ontario's black community has a long and proud history in our province. In 1979, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada to formally designate February as Black History Month. It's also true that over half of black Canadians live in the province of Ontario.

Rosemary Sadlier is president of the Ontario Black History Society and works tirelessly all year long to prepare for the programs for the Black History Month of February, and I thank her for that dedication.

African-Canadians have made many important contributions to Canada's diversity, culture, economy, literature, sports and politics, including my fondly remembered family friend Lincoln Alexander. On January 21 of each year now, Lincoln Alexander Day is proclaimed to celebrate his life and achievements, thanks to

Ted Arnott, MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills, Bas Balkissoon, MPP for Scarborough-Rouge River, and Paul Miller, MPP for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, who all co-introduced Bill 125.

It is my privilege to speak and recognize Black History Month as both an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the history and achievements of African-Canadians, and I encourage everyone to take this time to learn about their rich history, culture and traditions.

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SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to respond to the statement of the minister for seniors on the government's Seniors Community Grant Program. Our PC critic for seniors, the member from York-Simcoe, could not be here to deliver this response herself, due to an event she had to attend in her role as PC critic for the Ministry of the Attorney General.

This new grant program will be a good thing for the province's seniors. Organizations that work with our seniors need funding like this to hold events, offer learning programs or provide other help.

The government says the primary goal of this program is to help isolated seniors, yet isolated seniors are often not involved with the groups who would receive funding under this program, Speaker. This may be another example of politics from this government, to win support from a stakeholder group they want to keep inside.

If this government actually wanted to help seniors, it wouldn't eliminate on-site care for seniors at risk by cancelling the Alternative Community Living Program—care for seniors who may need help getting out of the shower or out of bed. This grant program does not make that wrong right.

ASSISTANCE TO ATHLETES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As the critic for sport, recreation and youth, I'm very pleased to stand in the Legislature, on behalf of all the members of the Legislature, and to speak specifically about the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics.

Over the past weeks, the world has watched as Canada sent its best athletes to compete in the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games. Team Canada won 10 gold, 10 silver and five bronze medals. This is an extremely exciting accomplishment.

This year, 63 Ontario athletes were a key part of the largest Canadian team ever sent to the Winter Olympics.

The Sochi games provided many memorable moments. London's Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir gave a figure skating performance for the ages. And Canada held its collective breath as the women's hockey team battled back to defeat the American rivals for gold. We looked on as our curlers, freestyle skiers and bobsled athletes triumphed. And on the last day of the games, nearly half of the country woke up to watch our men's

hockey team cap off the games with yet another gold medal.

Our athletes represent the best that Ontario has to offer, and serve as an inspiration for all of us. If only for a moment, the Olympics allow us to forget our differences as we come together to celebrate our great athletes.

Just as families, friends and communities come together to support our athletes as they train, we must also support our Olympians and Paralympians from Ontario, who, by the way, will be representing Canada at the Winter Games from March 7 to 16 in Sochi.

To our athletes, I offer my sincerest thanks for all that you do. Ontario is truly proud of you.

ASSISTANCE TO ATHLETES

Mr. Paul Miller: It is a great honour to stand here today to celebrate another successful Winter Olympics by our athletes.

Our athletes won, as was said, 25 medals, including 10 gold. They represent a lifetime of dedication and hard work. When the pressure was on, they put their best foot, ski and skate forward, doing our province and country proud.

While we are often quick to celebrate the accomplishments of the victors, it is important to recognize all those who competed. They competed with humility and class. They displayed great character and stand as an excellent role model for our youth. Our athletes have shown us what hard work and dedication can accomplish, and illustrate a relentless pursuit of their goals.

There is no finer example than the gold-medal-winning women's hockey team who, despite being down 2-0 to the United States with under five minutes to go, rallied not only to tie the game but to win it in overtime. That team illustrates the very best of Canadian spirit.

I'm proud to note that included in that victory was Hamilton's own Laura Fortino.

We also need to celebrate the families and coaches who have spent years supporting these athletes, often with great personal sacrifice. Without their commitment, and the communities who have rallied to support these athletes, their accomplishments would not have been possible.

I offer the warmest of congratulations to all the athletes who competed, and wish the best of luck to our Paralympic athletes set to compete in Sochi next month.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to rise today to respond to the statement from the minister responsible for seniors. The announcement of the new Seniors Community Grant Program is a welcome announcement for seniors and community groups working so hard to improve the lives of seniors throughout the province.

Let's be honest for a moment, Speaker. Seniors in Ontario are facing greater challenges than ever before. The non-stop cuts to health care and skyrocketing hydro

fees and auto insurance rates force many seniors into precarious living. Of course, New Democrats are very supportive of a program that provides funding to community groups and that can increase participation and the well-being of seniors. But we are less certain that the Liberals are able to roll this out in a manner that works for seniors. We know that the government has made big mistakes when it comes to delivering other programs for seniors. For example, when the government changed the way that physiotherapy was delivered to seniors, this caused chaos and concern across the province.

We also know that too many seniors have problems accessing health care services when and where they need them.

While we are happy to celebrate this day and eager to support a program where seniors are empowered to be active participants, we urge this government to show caution and care in the delivery of this new program.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, it is my honour to stand here today to talk about Black History Month. Much has been said by my colleagues, and all of the great names have been mentioned. So in the time limited to me, I just want to go to a couple of different places.

First of all, we need to recognize that black history in Canada involves all of those people who trace their roots from Africa. But those people did not come from one single place. They came from the United States. They came from the Caribbean. They came from South America. They came from Europe. They came, as well, directly from Africa. Each one of them brought with them a culture and language and traditions which are unique and which they have shared with us here in this great country of Canada.

They came here to find freedom. They came here to find opportunity. I hope that they have been successful, because I know, if you read the history books, that it was not always easy for those who came first. But they displayed, throughout the time that they were here, a loyalty that was unmatched. They served in two world wars. They sought political office. They were great leaders in their community amongst all of us. They went on to do great things in science and the arts. They are to be held up to great esteem.

As time permits, I just want to talk a little bit about Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, a woman whom I've known for many years, and the enormous effort that she puts into bringing black history to life so that all of us might know that part of Canadian and Ontario history that we might otherwise not have known, and how literally she has dedicated so many years to this endeavour.

In the last few seconds, I'd like to talk about the little town of Amherstburg, just south of Windsor—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In my riding.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, in the riding of Essex. There's a wonderful black history museum there that I

think everyone should have an opportunity to go down and look at. It shows how the first settlers who escaped to freedom across the Detroit River were able to integrate themselves into the local community, how they prospered, and how they were the voice for all of us about what freedom really means.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Chan: In my statement, I missed a name on the men's hockey gold-medal team. He was a member, and his name is Patrick Sharp. Thank you, Speaker.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas servers and bartenders in Ontario earn \$8.90 an hour, far less than the minimum wage; and

"Whereas tips are given to servers and bartenders for good service and to supplement the lower wages they receive; and

"Whereas Ontario law allows for owners and managers to pocket a portion of servers' and bartenders' earned tips or total sales; and

"Whereas thousands of servers and bartenders in the province have asked for this practice to stop;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the swift passage of Bill 107"—that's what it reads; it should be Bill 49—"An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to tips and other gratuities and thereby end the practice of 'tip-outs' to management and owners."

It is signed by a number of people. I'm pleased to affix my signature thereto.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition from the constituency of Ajax-Pickering.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I will sign my name to it and pass it on to Owen.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Rod Jackson: I have a petition here from the people of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the nation of Israel is a great friend to both the province of Ontario and the nation of Canada with many important economic and cultural ties; and

"Whereas Jewish Ontarians have served Ontario in a variety of political, cultural and economic roles and have brought great distinction on the province; and

"Whereas the comments made by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport regarding the relationship of the government to the state of Israel and the ties of Ontario's Jewish community to the political process demean that relationship by pitting two of Ontario's great cultural communities against one another;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport immediately apologize to the Jewish community for his comments in public at the next available opportunity or, if he will not do so, that the Premier reprimand him for his comments by asking for his resignation."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name and give it to page Aqil.

FIREFIGHTERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from—well, pretty well all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas firefighters are routinely exposed to burning chemicals and other toxins in the course of protecting the lives and property of fellow citizens; and

"Whereas even with the best respiratory practices and protective equipment, exposures will continue to occur due to absorption through the skin once a firefighter has become soaked during fire suppression activities; and

"Whereas epidemiological, medical and scientific studies conclusively demonstrate an increased rate of

diseases such as cancer in firefighters versus the general population;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Amend the regulations of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act ... to include cancer of the lungs, breasts, testicles, prostate, skin and multiple myeloma in presumptive legislation for occupational diseases related to firefighting."

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sarah to bring it to the Clerk.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School ... is 732 students, with 11 portables onsite;

"Whereas under current projections, by 2014, enrolment at the Avalon Public School is forecast to be in the 900 range increasing to approximately 1,359 students by 2022;

"Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space threatens the OCDSB's ability to offer full-day kindergarten in Avalon under the Ministry of Education's targets;

"Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

"Whereas the staff of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, following an objective, evidence-based process, recommended Avalon PS II as its top priority for a new school, calling the need 'urgent';

"Whereas the board disregarded independent staff counsel and ranked the school from number 1 to number 7;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build Avalon Public School II in the next round of capital projects."

It's signed by Nick Tremblay, Frederique Herbert and many others. I put my signature thereon and I send it forward with Abbey.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Ms. Laurie Scott: Stop the trades tax petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario College of Trades introduced new membership fees on April 1, 2013, which hit hard-working tradespeople to the tune of about \$84 million a year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop this job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately."

It's signed by many people from my riding, and I sign my signature and give it to Anne.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas those working 35 hours per week or more should not, as a matter of principle, be living in poverty; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I will affix my signature thereto and send it down with page Emily.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr. Joe Dickson: I present a petition in concert with the member of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town's original location at Russell Street; and

"Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

"Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay."

I attach my name to it and pass it to Michael.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the nation of Israel is a great friend to both the province of Ontario and the nation of Canada with many important economic and cultural ties; and

"Whereas Jewish Ontarians have served Ontario in a variety of political, cultural and economic roles and have brought great distinction on the province; and

"Whereas the comments made by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport regarding the relationship of the government to the state of Israel and the ties of Ontario's Jewish community to the political process demean that relationship by pitting two of Ontario's great cultural communities against one another;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport immediately apologize to the Jewish community for his comments in public at the next available opportunity or, if he will not do so, that the Premier reprimand him for his comments by asking for his resignation."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it with page Meera.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was actually collected by Lynn Vanstone, one of my constituents from beautiful Westree, northern Ontario.

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have" done some sort of price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with ... price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Emon to bring it to the Clerk.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to have this opportunity on this Thursday afternoon. The petition, on behalf of my constituents, reads as follows:

"Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

"Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens" with pride;

1400

"Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving

additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

"Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy"—it's tragic;

"Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds" for physiotherapy treatment after a stroke—shameful;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices" under the Wynne government.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and give it to Sarah, one of the young pages here.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Winchester District Memorial Hospital provides essential health services to the residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry" and the residents of Nepean-Carleton "and was awarded 'accreditation with exemplary standing'—the highest award by Accreditation Canada earlier this year; and

"Whereas the projected increase in Ontario's senior population demands that facilities have the resources and capacity required to accommodate increasing demand; and

"Whereas Ontarians cherish access to high-quality local health care; and

"Whereas the recent closure of 14 beds at the WDMH and the loss of over nine full-time skilled staff positions at a time when Ontario has experienced unemployment above the national average for over seven consecutive years are the result of ongoing silent funding cuts that are threatening our cherished health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate adequate funding levels for the Winchester District Memorial Hospital that would allow the reopening of local beds and the rehiring of local qualified front-line health staff."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to the page.

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Coast Guard Auxiliary units are oftentimes the first responders to any emergency situation that occurs on our waterways;

"Whereas the use of green flashing lights by Coast Guard volunteers in their vehicles would help to cut down on their response time by alerting others on the roadways to their presence;

"Whereas these flashing green lights are currently prohibited from use in Coast Guard volunteers' vehicles under regulations in the Highway Traffic Act that restrict the use of flashing green lights to only the vehicles of volunteer firefighters and ministry-prescribed medical responders;

"Whereas the flashing green lights cost nothing to the government as they are bought and paid for by the volunteers themselves;

"Whereas, if the Coast Guard Auxiliary units were allowed the use of these flashing green lights in their vehicles, it would cut down the transportation time on the roadways, and this cut in time could very well mean the difference between life and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Coast Guard Auxiliary units either become prescribed medical responders, or a change to the act that adds ministry-prescribed volunteer first responders access to the use of the flashing green emergency light."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Abbey.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (TROUBLE DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail relativement au trouble de stress post-traumatique.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The first thing I want to do is to acknowledge the presence of all of the folk here in the galleries: paramedics, firefighters and, of course, our

police officers. I wanted to ask members to give them a round of applause for all that they do for us.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In particular, Mr. Speaker, I want to note Bruce Kruger, David Whitley and Jeffrey Balch, who this morning took part in a panel. That panel talked about post-traumatic stress disorder. All of them have suffered from it—a paramedic, a firefighter and a police officer—and outlined exactly why we need this bill. The reason we need this bill is that we need to accord dignity and support to those first responders who rush into danger when we rush out, who look after us. We need to begin to look after them today.

Let me tell you why. I'm going to give you some stories. First of all, the story of Officer Bruce Kruger, who's now retired—here's a little glimpse into the life of a police officer. Kruger insists, by the way, on having the right seat. Bruce is over here. He has fled airplanes, he has cried in restaurants and he has rearranged furniture at friends' homes—all for the perfect seat. That seat is backed against a wall so no one can attack him from behind.

Kruger says that the sitting issue goes back to the murder of fellow OPP officer Tom Coffin in 1997. The killer came from behind and shot Coffin in the head at close range while Coffin was off duty in Penetanguishene.

Kruger has been diagnosed with PTSD connected with his 30-year career. Here are some of the things he has experienced: shooting and killing a prison escapee who was pointing a shotgun at his partner in 1977; finding slain OPP officer Rick Verdecchia frozen solid in a snowbank with three bullet holes between his eyes in 1978—Kruger, by the way, stayed with the body to protect the scene for several hours; and coming upon the bodies of a father and his six-year-old son who had drowned in 1978 and having to row the bodies back to the shore of Healey Lake—just a glimpse, Mr. Speaker, into the life of a police officer.

Here's a glimpse into the life of a paramedic. This is from paramedic Ryan Cotton. He says, "In December 2006, a woman had thrown her two-year-old off the Morningside bridge at the 401. Shortly after throwing her two-year-old off the bridge, this woman, after fighting with bystanders, had successfully thrown herself over the Morningside bridge onto the 401. I was there, the very first paramedic to the two-year-old. I was the second first responder to this child, as the first responder was a fireman who I found kneeling beside the child as he hung onto life, slowly dying. I never found out what happened to that fireman." What happened to Ryan was that he came down with post-traumatic stress disorder, from that and other events.

Here's a glimpse into the life of a firefighter. This was written by his spouse. This is Tony Holubeshen's story. She writes, "My husband, Tony, had been a Hamilton firefighter for 30 years. It was a job he loved and one he was cut out to do. He had many close calls: having all his hair burned off, caught in flashovers, and electrocuted.

But in February 2002, something happened that would change our lives forever. His station was called to an apartment building at 181 Jackson Street in Hamilton. While Tony was on the main floor, the two-inch concrete ceiling collapsed on him, and he was buried. After some time, he was found by his brave co-workers. I got a call in the middle of the night telling me there had been an accident and I was to go to the hospital. It seemed like a nightmare. At the hospital, Tony had visible physical injuries. Little did we know about the other injuries." Tony came down with post-traumatic stress disorder.

This is what our first responders do for us. This is what they do for us. It's incumbent upon us, I feel, that we should protect them when they succumb to post-traumatic stress disorder.

I want to give you a little bit of history on this bill. In 2007, the government brought in a bill that, originally, our leader, Andrea Horwath, coined, and that was in relation to firefighters. That was a presumed diagnosis of certain kinds of cancers. This came out of the Plastimet fire; many who are here from the fire world will know about that. It's almost impossible to prove that you got those cancers from your work. When you go to WSIB and you try to prove it, it's re-traumatizing. You can imagine that if that's true for cancer, it's even more true for post-traumatic stress disorder.

1410

We heard on the panel this morning about the long and gruelling mechanism of having to prove you actually acquired post-traumatic stress disorder from your job—virtually impossible to do, by the way, but in the process you have to provide names and dates, breach confidences. You have to bring into play all of the events that brought on your PTSD in the first place. This is not the way to treat our first responders.

I want to read you something from the Clinical Psychology Review. They wrote, in 2012: "There are a limited number of occupations and professions that repeatedly put those so employed squarely in harm's way; two prominent examples are combat soldiers and first responders. Indeed, the latter group often comprises members of the former."

We recognize PTSD in our soldiers and all of our military, but we don't recognize it as part, sometimes, of the job they do, in our first responders. Today, I hope to rectify that.

I want to give a shout-out, too, to a special young woman, because she was the inspiration for this bill back many years ago. It first came to my attention by a constituent, Shannon Bertrand, who's here in the gallery as well, a young paramedic. She outlined what you had to go through just to try to get, unsuccessfully, really, some coverage from WSIB.

I want to say a few things, too, about maybe some of the concerns members might be having. One of the concerns that was brought to my attention was the possible cost to the municipalities about this, and I can tell you, there is an answer to that question.

First of all, Alberta has had this legislation in place as law since 2012. My constituency assistant—I want to

give her a shout-out, too; she's watching in her office: Bhutla Karpoche—phoned all the cities in Alberta and asked them, "Has this added to your expense?" They all said, "Absolutely not." In some cases, they say it streamlines it, because you can imagine that the whole diagnostic process and assessment process that WSIB has to go through and that employers have to go through with them takes time. That would be eliminated because, again, we're presuming that somebody who gets PTSD and who's a first responder gets it from the job.

"Did the cases go up?" we asked them. They said absolutely not; the same number of cases, really, they said, as before. The difference was the dignity and support with which those who made claims were dealt with. These are important items to keep in mind.

I know the government has put in place a panel to look at post-traumatic stress disorder, but that's really in the Ministry of Labour, to look at prevention and awareness. I think we've come to the point in Ontario where we understand that post-traumatic stress disorder, in fact, all mental illness—we understand it's truly an illness. These are not folk who are malingering.

We've had Ombudsman oversight and actually Ombudsman input into this as well in Ontario. We've done a gamut of looking at the problem, and now it's time really to look at a solution.

I had a superintendent in my own riding, a police officer, who said that in the ceremonies to honour those who fall in the line of duty, all he could think about was one member of his force who had committed suicide, and he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. The superintendent said, "I wished we could honour him." Again, we want to honour those people.

What does post-traumatic stress disorder look like? Well, you've heard from the wife of a sufferer. What you didn't hear from her are the separation and divorce statistics associated with it, the alcoholism associated with it, the flashbacks, the anxiety disorders, sometimes obsessive-compulsive acts, terrible nightmares, sleeplessness, insomnia. It truly is a debilitating disease, and we can't make that point often enough. It truly is a debilitating disease.

Again, I want to thank those who are brave enough—I have a file folder in my office about this thick of stories from people who have suffered from PTSD. They're first responders. I know that every one of those stories is not only a story of suffering for them and their families, their units and their friends, but also a tale of bravery, that they were even able to put it to paper and send it to me, even able to say and speak about it on a panel this morning. That takes immense bravery.

Why would we ask them to go over and over and over it again, once the diagnosis is in place? It's cruel, it's unusual punishment, and it shouldn't happen.

I want to talk too—I only have a few minutes left—about who supports this: The Ontario Provincial Police Association; the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, including the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters' Association; the Police Association of Ontario, which

includes regional police associations; the Ontario Paramedic Association, which includes the Toronto Paramedic Association; Tema Conter Memorial Trust; OPSEU; Unifor; CUPE; ATU—a host of people, in fact, almost 20,000. Almost 20,000 members across Ontario will be covered by this bill if we pass it, and I hope we will.

There's a hashtag, and it's #heroesarehuman. I believe that, as we sit in this Legislature this afternoon, as we look around at the faces of those who have come, some of them in terrible weather, some of them driving long distances on the 400—some of them are watching, by the way, on televisions in offices because they are still on call because of that terrible weather on our highways. But they are watching and they are here, and they're here, I'm sure, with somebody in mind: some family, some person, someone who has put their life on the line and this has been the result. It doesn't happen to everyone any more than cancers happen to every firefighter who runs into a fire, but to those it does happen to, we owe a huge debt. To those, we offer some support in this bill, and to those, I hope, if we all agree in this House, we will actually offer some help, finally.

So I urge every member around this House to vote for this bill. The vote will come at the end of private members' public business. I look forward to what you have to say and to responding to what you have to say.

Again, let's give a round of applause to those first responders who came out today in support of their colleagues and themselves and their families.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very happy to speak on Bill 67. This bill seeks to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, so that all claims related to PTSD for emergency response workers are presumed to have been as a result of their work. The bill defines "emergency response worker" to mean a firefighter, paramedic or police officer.

We all know that police officers, firefighters and first responders are vital to keeping our communities safe from life-threatening dangers. Every day, they risk their lives to protect us and our communities. In return, we must protect them.

I'd like to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for introducing this bill and engaging in debate on this very important issue. Our government is supportive of the intent of this bill and would like to see this go to committee for further review.

Mr. Speaker, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I have taken special interest in the health and safety of Ontarians at work. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a very serious condition. It often affects those who protect us from harm as they work through difficult and trying situations daily. I think it's important to note that the WSIB currently provides compensation for traumatic mental stress when there is a clear link between the work and the injury or illness.

Claims for post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, are adjudicated by a specialized team of case managers on a case-by-case basis according to WSIB policy. By using this specialized team, the WSIB has significantly reduced their adjudication time. In 2006, the average time it took for a decision relating to a police officer's claim for PTSD was just over 150 days. In 2011, the average was 70 days.

In addition, our government has been very active on this issue. In September 2012, our government launched a round table to help workers who suffer from job-related traumatic mental stress injuries. The focus of the round table was to enable workplace parties to share approaches and best practices to deal with traumatic mental stress in the workplace through prevention, early diagnosis and intervention. The round table includes approximately 20 labour and employer representatives, with a focus on the following sectors: police, firefighters, emergency medical services, transit services, and health care, primarily nursing. The round-table report will be published shortly and includes recommendations on how best to address this important issue in the workplace. We're hopeful that this round table will help us significantly to identify and share best practices in the following areas to ensure that we're doing everything we can to protect Ontario's workers.

1420

Over the past several years, the WSIB has been involved in leading research that examines stressors in policing as well as factors that facilitate or act as barriers to seeking treatment and returning to work after an acute traumatic event. I understand that the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards have been working with the WSIB regarding PTSD claims for police officers.

The WSIB has assigned dedicated case managers to handle all police officer traumatic mental stress claims. The WSIB has been working hard to improve the claims process for PTSD amongst police officers and raise the profile of PTSD amongst other police services. The WSIB is looking at ways to increase PTSD education and awareness among individual police officers. The WSIB is also looking at diagnostic tools for police PTSD cases.

These are key to the early recognition and treatment of PTSD. I encourage employers and employees to work together to develop workplace practices to combat stress and promote healthy living.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work being done to address this issue: with the WSIB having a specialized team of case managers for claims regarding traumatic stress; with the round table our government launched to address the issue head on; and with a PTSD working group between the WSIB and the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. But there's always more to be done.

Ontario's first responders put the safety of our communities before their own, and our government recognizes the debt all Ontarians owe them for protecting us every day.

Once again, I'd like to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for introducing this very important bill. I'm very happy to support it at second reading today. I look forward to this bill going to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm very pleased to rise to speak on this bill this afternoon. This is an important bill, and I know that a number of my colleagues from our PC caucus are wanting to speak to this as well, so I look forward to sharing my time with them today.

First off, I'm proud to join with the PC caucus in supporting this bill. It is important for us to stand with our front-line workers and support them in their difficult tasks. These are the people we call when things get tough, and we are all thankful for the first-class police, fire and paramedics that we have here in the province of Ontario. I have met and worked with emergency and front-line workers since my election back in 2011, and I look forward to working closely with these fine people as we move forward with this bill.

Speaker, we're blessed to have amazing front-line workers like Dale Blanchard from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. In December 2012, 47-year-old Gary Smits was playing a pickup hockey game and felt some chest pain, but continued to play. As the Medway High School teacher skated back onto the ice for another shift, he passed out. Fortunately, Dale, who works with the Middlesex–London EMS, was among those playing in the same game and was able to get the arena's defibrillator equipment and use it to restart his heart while the team was waiting for emergency services to arrive. Dale was able to save the life of a man who suffered a heart attack in an arena in the town that I live in, Mount Brydges.

Doctors later told Gary one artery was 80% blocked, and without Dale's help, it could have been a lot worse. While Dale is a spare in the hockey league—he was called in when his team needed it—it didn't take long for him to forget his goaltending skills and put all his focus into his paramedic skills.

Dale doesn't have PTSD, but this bill is important so we can protect people like Dale in case that does happen. So I'm proud to be standing with my colleagues today, protecting people like Dale Blanchard.

I'd also like to thank MPP DiNovo, who has listened to our concerns from her previous versions of this bill, and we look forward to continuing to work on this bill, to supporting it, to getting it through committee. Thank you, again, and I'll look forward to voting in favour of this bill later this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai le plaisir et aussi, en même temps, la responsabilité de soutenir le projet de loi 67, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), 2014.

At the outset, I would like to as well join my colleague the MPP for Parkdale–High Park, Ms. DiNovo, in

welcoming all our various firefighter, paramedic, police service, front-line folk who are here today, who, as has been mentioned, keep us safe and secure in our various domains, whether it's at home, the office, work or even outside in the streets.

As a physician, as a parliamentarian, someone who actually treats post-traumatic stress disorder, I thought, with your permission, MPP DiNovo, I might highlight for not only the audience but also Ontarians what precisely is post-traumatic stress disorder.

At the outset, of course, the first requirement for that is a level of stress, a level of traumatic stress—high-end, indigestible stress—whether it's, as we said, a gunshot wound or a stabbing or more particularly for our front-line workers today, entering a burning building, certainly seeing one of your colleagues suffer great harm, perhaps even being the person who dispatches them to that particular location.

What also happens within the mind—and there are lots of different theories, but I'll simplify it—whatever you've experienced, you cannot get over it. It continues to play in the mind. The video, the audio, the sense of smell, the burning, the different sensations that you experience are embedded—literally burned—into your sense of self, and you cannot go beyond it. That same trauma can be replayed.

I, particularly, for example, having patients who come from war-torn countries, experience the challenges of dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Folks, for example, will hear loud noises, whether it's a car explosion, or let's say something on the street or a muffler or whatever, and it immediately, within a microsecond, within the millisecond transmission of a neurotransmitter in the brain, reverts them back to whatever that war situation was. Even folks who, for example, hear smoke alarms in their home think somehow that's the war air-raid siren from whatever country they happen to come from, and it immediately sets them back into that frame of mind.

What do they experience? There's a long, long list, unfortunately. As a family physician, as well as a parliamentarian, these are the things that we have to deal with. They will lose their sleep, whether they have non-restful sleep, are unable to sleep, they have nighttime awakening—even if they spend eight or 10 hours in bed, they may emerge unrested.

They lose interest in what previously was very absorbing for them. They kind of withdraw from life. They lose the colour of life. They feel guilty. For example, we've chatted with some of the dispatchers. "If I had sent a different crew," "If I had been more active," "If I had called," for example, "extra support on the ground"—that sense of guilt replays again and again.

They lose energy. As I said earlier, they tend to withdraw or, as we say, involute. It's kind of like a plant that doesn't receive sunlight: It's still there, but just barely functioning.

They lose their concentration, not merely forgetting about where the keys are or "Did I turn the stove off?"

but a deeper sense, where, for example, they're attempting to learn something, read something, navigate something, and they're just not able to introduce it into their mind and latch hold on to it.

They may have changes in appetite, usually to extreme, or actually lose it. By the way, there's a whole psychological theory that goes on and says if you find emptiness over here—maybe, for example, the loss of a friend or a loved one, whatever—you actually fill your life up with things over here, meaning, by the way, in this case, food.

They may have what we call psychomotor agitation or retardation, which are fancy doc-talk billable words that essentially mean they get angry to the point where they may want to smash walls or even self-harm or, by the way, wash away their blues with various substances, some of which have become famous in the city of Toronto.

1430

Unfortunately, they may even have what we call suicidality. Doctors have this strange term called "successful suicides," meaning fully completed suicides: no survivors. I never quite understood the sense of that term. We deal with these types of patients on a regular basis, whether it's, as I say, my broader colleagues in the medical field, in the post-traumatic situation, or I personally—more often, folks who are coming from, for example, civil wars or war-torn countries.

In any case, all of these things merge. There's a confluence. It's like your mind is fighting on too many fronts and cannot handle it. Of course, everything suffers: their performance; as I said earlier, their colour of life; their relationships; their ability to earn and so on.

That's, of course, why MPP DiNovo's bill, Bill 67, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), 2014, is so very, very important, because individuals who have chosen to secure our lives should at least remain secure with the knowledge that those of us who are stewards of the governing bodies and the regulators and governance are there for them in their time of need, when they're there for us in our time of need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to join in the debate. I want to commend my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing this bill forward. As my colleague has already indicated, those of us from the PC caucus will do what we can to ensure quick passage of this bill.

In fact, I'd like to make a suggestion to the government. I want to thank all of my colleagues in the Legislature who supported my bill, the First Responders Day Act—that was passed unanimously in this place, received second and third reading unanimously on December 10, and received royal assent on December 12—which declares May 1 of every year as First Responders Day.

My colleagues will remember that what inspired me to bring that bill forward, first of all, was my engagement

over the last number of years on a number of files that brought me face to face with the men and women who serve on the front lines as first responders.

I was also given a book entitled 911: True Tales of Courage and Compassion. It was written by a constituent of mine, Vali Stone. It's 34 stories, true recollections, from first responders about their experiences. It was really the first time that I came face to face with the reality that men and women who put themselves in harm's way every day have personal effects on their lives. These are not men and women who don't have feelings.

I wanted to just read one excerpt from veteran police officer Brent Pilkey, who was quoted in that book: "There are many cops like me who walk around hurting and hide their feelings because they are here to protect the public, solve problems, uphold the law and be the strength and backbone of society. We are tough. We take people to hospitals—we don't go there ourselves. We don't feel. We don't break down."

Well, the truth is, they do, and it's no wonder that they do, given the engagement that they have, every day in their lives, in events that most of us would be incapable of coping with.

And so, we honour them with a First Responders Day, and I would encourage my colleague that we all work together to ensure that this bill can be celebrated as having been passed into law on First Responders Day, May 1, of this year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to stand here today on behalf of my constituents in London West, and I want to say a special hello to Jim Holmes, who's here from the London Professional Firefighters Association, representing the OPFFA.

I'm also, as members of this House know, the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services. I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for her initiative in bringing forward Bill 67, the legislation to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

As a relatively new member of this House—not so new anymore—and also someone new to the community safety critic portfolio, I had the privilege during the fall session of this Legislature to stand up and speak on behalf of NDP leader Andrea Horwath and members of the NDP caucus on a number of occasions about the important contributions of police officers, firefighters, paramedics and other emergency service personnel who risk their lives in the call of duty in order to keep all of us and our communities safe. In particular, my very first statement as community safety critic was the tribute to the fallen, which was a moment when MPPs from across this House came together to honour fallen first responders, those incredibly brave and selfless individuals who arrive on the scene of an emergency ready to do whatever it takes to save lives, even at the cost of their own.

I listened closely to the minister and to the PC critic as they spoke eloquently and passionately about the debt we

owe to those who lost their lives and to all first responders in Ontario. I know that first responders appreciated this acknowledgement of their sacrifice, the fine words and the lofty rhetoric that we exchanged in this House.

I'm so incredibly proud to hear what I've heard today from members across this floor about their commitment to moving forward on this legislation, because if we're serious about truly honouring the work that first responders do and if we really mean what we say when we talk about the debt that we owe to them for their service, then we must be unanimous in this House in supporting the passage of this bill.

Health care professionals have learned a lot—and we heard that from my colleague across the floor—over the years about the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder and some of the treatment that is available. But there have also been changes in the nature of the trauma and the violence that first responders face in their daily work. All of this increases the risk that they will develop PTSD in the course of their careers.

Instead of being leaders in this area, Ontario has lagged behind other provinces in recognizing the presumptive principle for PTSD as a work-related injury. Instead of supporting first responders to seek the help they need and to access treatment for PTSD, Ontario has re-victimized those who stepped forward, as we heard from my colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park, by forcing them to go through a lengthy, exhausting and intrusive process to prove that their illness is work-related in order to establish their right to be compensated. As a result, as we saw in an editorial today from the police, many first responders simply won't seek help, even though the research shows us that PTSD affects up to 15% of police officers, as many as one quarter of paramedics and numerous firefighters over the course of their careers.

As someone who worked in the women's shelter system, dealing with women who had experienced abuse, I myself had an incident of vicarious trauma as I witnessed a violent situation. I remember the uncontrollable weeping that I faced for about a 24-hour period afterwards. I can't imagine the anguish and the stress that first responders have to try to make sense of as they see the things that they see in the course of their daily lives.

I am very pleased to support my colleague and to stand in this House in support of this legislation. My congratulations to all those who have expressed their support as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: As the Ontario PC critic for community safety and correctional services, I'm pleased to join with my colleagues in debate and in support of Bill 67. I also want to take the opportunity, as many of my colleagues have, to congratulate the member for Parkdale–High Park for re-introducing this legislation and for all of her advocacy.

1440

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our first responders who are here in the gallery today. I want to

thank you for the service that you give to your communities and to the province of Ontario. As first responders, you are willing to put your lives on the line and be there when we need you. The price of keeping us safe is one that can come at a very steep price for your physical and mental well-being. I want to say this very clearly: It's not asking too much for you to expect that when you need help because of what you've encountered on the job, the help you need, including WSIB, is there.

Ontario PCs understand that for police, firefighters and paramedics, every shift has the potential to expose you to the kinds of traumatic experiences that can be understood only by someone who has walked in your boots. It's true that the average person can't imagine what you experience at the scene of a crime, a fire or a fatal collision, but society is waking up to the realization that our mental health is just as important as our physical health for our overall well-being.

As that happens, there's a recognition of PTSD for the debilitating condition that it is. PTSD isn't something you can shake off, a belief that for far too long left people to suffer in silence, or take their own lives to finally make the nightmare stop. PTSD is real, and we need to make sure we're providing our front-line emergency services personnel the help they need when they need it. If you're a front-line emergency services worker with PTSD, you shouldn't have to spend years fighting the WSIB bureaucracy to prove it. That's why I'm proud to support this legislation. I'm proud that all three parties are supporting this legislation to ensure that it gets to committee, where we'll have an opportunity to discuss it. The member for Newmarket–Aurora made a great suggestion about First Responders Day. Wouldn't it be great if we could all co-operate and get that done?

You don't have to spend long as an MPP in a constituency office to hear from workers and the horror stories they have to tell about their experience with their claims. Add to that the cost of the system to employers and an unfunded liability that's on its way to \$20 billion, and you've got a WSIB system that we charitably refer to as broken.

I appreciate all the support that members are giving the member. I'm proud to support the legislation, and I'm proud to be a member of the Ontario Legislature today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm truly honoured to take part in this debate today and to add my support for this bill that I believe corrects an injustice. I believe it does something that we all need to do, and that is to acknowledge the role that our first responders play in our society and the role and job that we ask them to do.

Before I begin my thoughts, Mr. Speaker, I just want to introduce some guests I had the opportunity to meet as they were coming in to witness the debate. Natalie Harris and Ian McLean are here. They're paramedics from Simcoe county. They're here to witness today's debate, and also Paul Roberts, Marcus Kirton and Scott Macdonald. I don't know if they're still in the building,

but they also came in during their break to bear witness to today's debate.

It's not often that such a compelling case for support of a bill has been made in the short span of 12 minutes. As I listened here today as my colleague the originator of the bill, the MPP for Parkdale–High Park, spoke so eloquently and so clearly and passionately about the need to support this bill and our obligation to make this change, it's difficult for me to add anything of incredible substance to what she has already said. I think she definitely had the head-nod test after her speech here in support of this bill. I want to simply commend her for being relentless and such a passionate advocate on behalf of our first responders and the need to move forward on this legislation.

What we are asking of this body is fairly simple. It is an acknowledgement that we ask our first responders to witness what we ourselves couldn't imagine we should witness. We ask them to do and to perform the job that we ourselves are not equipped to perform. We ask them to bear witness to catastrophe, to disasters, to incredible trauma and situations that are incredibly unique. Some have raised scenarios that highlight those disasters, those catastrophes. But it doesn't always have to end in tragedy to be traumatic. There are some victories, there are some scenarios where all is well at the end of the day, but the pressure and the strain and the stress put on the mind, the heart and the body, day in and day out, would be enough, in a cumulative effort, to cause these effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Above that, the other indications and the other examples, we have to acknowledge that we are asking our first responders to do what we could not do ourselves. We also ask them, through legislation, to go to work without having the ability to remove themselves from a dangerous situation. They have to go to work. When we run away from a fire, they are legislatively, legally obligated to run in. That has to be acknowledged.

Today, I simply want to thank our first responders. I want to stand here with my colleagues and to provide, I guess, an opportunity to show the best that this House can be, that we can absolutely do the right thing and make these positive changes to honour the sacrifices that are made by our first responders each and every day.

It has been, again, an honour to rise today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus. I fully endorse the spirit of this bill and hope that it receives quick passage through the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing that up, and I also want to thank the first responders for being here today. I think everyone in the House is impressed with your show up, and we're all here to support the important contribution you make to our community.

I would say that, in this particular bill, the member from Newmarket–Aurora has made it very clear that we'll be supporting the legislation. I think he has made

some very excellent observations and recommendations, I might say as well.

This really does shift the burden of proof from the plaintiff to the defendant, meaning that the police force or fire department or ambulance service would have to prove that their employee does not have PTSD. So, in fact, it should go to committee. In committee, it could be your opportunity to bring a voice to the debate so that we can all do the right thing to protect you in the workplace. That's the real intent here of WSIB.

I would like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville as well, who has had some say on this file to the greatest extent.

I only say this, that the final remarks that I have to make are that to understand what has been said today about post-traumatic stress syndrome—I did have a son who served in the forces for 12 years. The only time I was actually ever worried about him was when he was a navigator on the Hercules aircraft, when they were actually in Bosnia delivering supplies. So he really wasn't in a position with direct fire or anything like that, except when they landed, and he sent back a little note to us, that the first time they were under fire was when they were going across the runway. As a parent, you just feel the shock.

My next experience, to bring some understanding and respect for what you do, is that I was driving to work, as I have for 18-plus years, down the Don Valley, and a young woman—it was so surreal—was standing on the top of the bridge. There used to be a woman who was dressed up as an angel standing there. I looked at it—and, you know, you don't really know what's going on—and she jumped and landed on the car in front of me. I was just stunned. I lost all sense of reality for the moment. And so I understand what you would discover. A suicide or some other event, it must be traumatic. It would have an effect on you, and I hope that this genuinely remedies the issue, but it never really solves the problem.

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I thank you for putting yourself in danger each day to keep us safe. That's what we're all here to say: Thank you.

Doing the right thing is actually the right politics. I think the member from Parkdale–High Park has it right this time. Congratulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Actually, a little longer, but thank you, Speaker.

I want to first of all commend everyone who spoke to this bill. Thank you so much.

I would like to start by just referring back to my friend from Brampton West and some of his concerns. Whether it's 70 days to process a claim or two years, it's too long. It's re-victimizing the victim here. It's dragging our first responders through a kind of hell—that's parliamentary—that they don't need to be dragged through. They've already gone there, and we don't need to take them back.

That's the whole purpose of this bill, to dispense with that.

It's not a slap in the face of WSIB. In fact, when I first tabled this bill, I went to speak to Steve Mahoney, who was then the chair. He was quite supportive. This would simplify the work of WSIB. This makes their job easier. They don't have to give this to an adjudicator; it doesn't have to take up their time. They have other things to do.

I want to give you some examples of how awful it is—but when it moves to committee, which I'm hearing it will, that's a very good place for first responders to come and testify and tell the government exactly what it does look like to try to get a claim through WSIB on post-traumatic stress disorder. That's a good opportunity to let them know. I've heard from first responders that they have been turned down simply because they had a divorce in their past, and they can't prove that their post-traumatic stress disorder didn't come from the divorce, even though they're running into burning buildings or saving children or watching colleagues be killed. This is patently absurd, and it's patently wrong.

I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora, of course, for his work on First Responders Day, and also to say that it's a wonderful suggestion. Your leader is here. Talk to your House leader as well. Maybe we can get this going.

Yes, the sooner the better, we want to go to committee. We want to hear from you at committee to make a case. Then we want a speedy turnaround of this bill so that we can actually see it put to law, because our first responders—you all who are here and took the time to come out—you deserve absolutely nothing less. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

MILLION JOBS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA CRÉATION D'UN MILLION D'EMPLOIS

Mr. Hudak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to promote job creation in Ontario /
Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à promouvoir la création
d'emplois en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, Ontario is at a tipping point, and let's face it, our great province is in a mess. It is on this note that I rise today with my private member's bill, the Million Jobs Act, because Ontario has veered off the path that leads to prosperity and desperately needs to get back on track.

In 1913, the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Co. built a plant on Dundas Street in London at the corner of what was then called Festubert Lane. The plant was there on Dundas through World War I. In 1924, it became the

head office of the Kellogg Company of Canada. It lasted through the Great Depression and the Second World War, and it grew.

And then, some eight weeks ago, 110 men and women went to work at Kellogg's for the last time. Later this year, some 565 more workers will face the heartbreaking experience of walking out of that Kellogg plant on Dundas Street forever, without a job. Then, after 101 years, that plant will be gone.

When I talk to workers who have lost a job, and many of them have held those jobs their entire lives, they often say it makes them feel unbearably alone. But they won't be alone when they go to that unemployment office. Instead, they'll be joining the 190 workers from Timken Bearings who lost their jobs when the plant closed last summer, and another 450 from Caterpillar, and from Ford, and from Daimler Trucks.

This is so very wrong. Ontario-wide, some 300,000 men and women have lost manufacturing jobs in this past decade. To make this point, if we wanted to meet all of those workers individually to hear what they had to say, we would fill up this Legislature with a different group of laid-off workers every day, seven days a week, for eight straight years.

I've talked to a lot of those workers, and they did everything they were supposed to do. They worked hard. They developed their skills. They stayed loyal to their company and to their co-workers. But through no fault of their own, they faced that awful moment of telling their kids that there wouldn't be hockey this year because mom lost her job.

I met a worker in a similar circumstance from John Deere in Niagara—a good, secure, middle-class job. Now he is working part-time, parking cars outside of one of the hotels, at far, far less than half the wage that he used to make. He talked to me about what it meant for his budget and what it meant for his family. But he started with what it did to his pride as a human being.

My Million Jobs Act is the antidote this province so drastically needs and the catalyst that will put Ontario's economy back on track.

There are five key things that my bill will do, and it is imperative that this House recognizes that action is needed now, today, to get this bill passed—not just second reading, but passed into law.

My million jobs plan will produce more jobs and increase take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt. Well-run businesses will invest in well-run provinces;

It will ensure affordable energy that will actually create jobs, not eliminate them;

It will train more skilled workers—in fact, 250,000—to meet the huge potential in the trades and help put young people into good, steady, middle-class jobs;

It will increase trade with our neighbours and will put high-quality made-in-Ontario products on the shelves across Canada and around the world—it will put a swaggering strut back into manufacturing in our province; and

Fifth, it will end the bureaucratic runaround that inhibits job creation, that has entrepreneurs from small to

large companies snarled up and handcuffed in red tape. I want them innovating, putting new products out there, hiring men and women again, not filling out useless government forms.

Not that long ago, Ontario was what they called the “have” province; now, it’s a have-not. For 86 consecutive months—that’s over seven years—our unemployment rate has surpassed the national average. In my home, the Niagara Peninsula, once a hub for manufacturing and food processing—it’s now being called the rust belt. Its unemployment rate is the highest in the entire province.

1500

My Million Jobs Act has never been more desperately needed. The problem is that under this government, the only jobs that they seem to create are part-time minimum wage jobs. In fact, there has been a doubling of minimum wage jobs since this government came to power. And its reward to hard-working people trying to get ahead, Speaker? They want to give them 75 cents more an hour, and that’s it: no prospect for a better future; three quarters more, every hour they work. That worker who talked to me, who lost his pride: He needs his pride back, with a steady, good, middle-class job, not 75 cents more an hour.

My plan will see our young people pursuing their dreams right here in Ontario, not taking their university or college educations to another province or across the border to the States. They’ll find their career and their path here. My plan will spring them from their parents’ basements and put them in their own home and on their own path to prosperity. My plan won’t let them down. It’s going to lift them up and move them forward.

Producing more jobs and increasing take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt will mark the rebirth of hope in the province of Ontario. Our young people need hope. They need to know that their goals can be achieved right here at home.

For Ontario to strut again, we have to unleash its incredible power. My million jobs plan will be the economic motivator that this government just can’t seem to find. It will turn this province around; it will put us on that path to prosperity.

I believe in the people of Ontario. They’re hard-working, they’re industrious, and, yes, of course, they’re proud, and justifiably so. None of them would ever dream of giving up on this province, and they don’t expect their government to give up either. I am with them. Successful leaders are the ones who embrace the need for change, not those who pretend that that need does not exist.

The ideas I laid out in my million jobs plan—look, they’re not without political risk. But the future of Ontario is too important not to be bold. It won’t be easy, but it can be done, and it will be worth it.

As I’ve said here many times, I did not get into politics to hedge my bets. I got into politics to put Ontario on the path to prosperity, to set it up for success. The problem facing Ontario families is that hard-working, middle-class men and women, and the million people

who are out of work—well, they don’t have it so good. The special interests, the insiders, the friends of the Liberal government—well, I guess they’ve got it pretty good right now. They’re on the inside. But for hard-working Ontarians who are falling farther and farther behind, they need hope, they need a plan, and they need the Million Jobs Act put into action today.

Speaker, I began my comments by talking about the hard-working men and women in London who, through no fault of their own, lost their jobs, and they’re losing their hope in the future of this province. I make no apologies for telling this House that that’s who is at the top of my mind today, and that every decision I make is about those front-line workers and how to help them out to move ahead again. Ontario held a promise for them when they were raised here or moved here. When they entered the workforce, Ontario held promise. I’m absolutely convinced it should hold even greater promise today, just as our young people deserve their future to be bright and purposeful. That path won’t be easy, but we know where it lies. I think Ontario is ready to go there, and I’m ready to lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: For those who are watching at home, Bill 158, which is a bill that has been brought forward by Tim Hudak and the PC Party, would, if passed, allegedly create one million jobs in the province of Ontario. But first and foremost—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Stop the clock. Order.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: First and foremost, it needs to be said that creating jobs in this province is a very good thing. With an unemployment rate at about 7.5% and the fact that this province has become a have-not province under the Liberals, it is very much needed, especially in the north and in Kenora–Rainy River. Across the north, we have lost 27,000 jobs, many of them in the forest industry.

I don’t think you’ll find anyone in this province who disagrees that work needs to be undertaken to create many jobs, at least 588,000 jobs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask members of the opposition if they would keep it quiet. I think the House was respectful to your leader when he was speaking, and we should give some respect to our member for Kenora–Rainy River.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you.

We actually need 588,000 jobs in this province. To be clear, that’s to clear up our unemployment, because that’s how many Ontarians we have out of work.

This PC plan would see that—just in a nutshell, they want to freeze public sector employees’ pay for two years; make amendments to the FIT program that would give municipalities the responsibility of issuing approvals

for large-scale projects; reduce the corporate tax from 11.5% to 10%, the same as Alberta; and it sets targets for ministries to cut the amount of their regulations by 33% in three years.

But I fail to see, and I'm sure many Ontarians fail to see, the correlation between these proposals and creating the jobs that are necessary. We know that there is no positive correlation between no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts and job creation. If there was, the billions of dollars of investment that the federal and provincial governments have spent would have created the 588,000 jobs that we need.

There are things the NDP proposes that are very tangible, realistic things like a job creator tax credit, which would be a two-year refundable job creator tax credit that would be administered through the existing corporate tax system and would be simple and straightforward.

We know that cutting regulations willy-nilly is reckless and irresponsible, and it's typical of the PCs to cut without thinking about the impact. Northerners were left shaking their heads when PC MPP Norm Miller introduced a bill in 2012 that would repeal the Far North Act. That would have done nothing to help mining and the development of the Ring of Fire. It would have created a Wild West situation that would have just created further delays and further payouts of mining companies. Northerners said that the Far North Act was filled with problems, but we didn't need it repealed without a replacement.

In contrast, the NDP proposed to implement a consultative process that would consider changes where northerners, including First Nations, are listened to and respected, where we can actually expect to see mining jobs.

The other thing is, although it's not particular in this bill, the PCs are always talking about reducing the number of public service employees, which may sound good, but it can have drastic effects. It has an impact on mining right now, and I want to bring that perspective forward. In Kenora–Rainy River, we saw some recent cuts that were made to the Ministry of the Environment that resulted in significant delays of environmental assessments being approved for projects, one of those projects being Rainy River Resources, now New Gold. We almost saw 500 jobs just completely cut out.

The other thing is, economist Mike Moffatt says that the PCs “would need a great deal of good luck because much of what happens on the provincial job creation front is outside the provincial government's control.”

The fact is that our economy and unemployment is very dependent on how well the US is doing. “Moffatt has crunched Statistics Canada data on job growth in Ontario and found that since 1976, the province has created an average of 85,000 jobs per year”—and that this province typically creates about 600,000 jobs over the same eight-year period. So it's quite lofty.

Another question that we have to consider is what kind of jobs are they proposing, especially when there's

specific mention in this bill of freezing wages. It makes me think of how just last week, the PCs backed down from their right-to-work plan.

1510

Sun columnist Peter Epp writes: “One question that ought to be asked of Hudak, the Tories, and the other political parties whose leaders also desire more new jobs for Ontario, is about the quality of the employment they believe their leadership can foster. It's one thing for unemployment in this province to be magically wiped out with the stroke of a legislative pen, but any new jobs must pay much better than minimum wage ... they must also hold the promise of a bright future.”

Another question I have is, why do the PCs think it is achievable or necessary to create one million jobs when we only need 60% of that to put everybody back to work? Presently, there are 588,000 people out of work in Ontario.

Again, I'm going to quote Sun columnist Peter Epp, who writes: “In using the ‘million’ word, Hudak and his colleagues are overreaching. We don't need to create one million jobs in Ontario; but we do need to find work for the approximately half a million Ontarians who are out of work”—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There are at least 10 conversations going on to my left. I think every one of you who is in those conversations knows who you are. I need to hear the speaker, and I can't.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm just going to skip to my summary real quick since the Progressive Conservatives ate up most of my time.

I just think it's ridiculous. Experts say that it's unachievable, it's irresponsible to throw out “one million jobs.” Yes, creating jobs is our number one priority. We are already onto it with things like targeted investments linked to job creation; the job creation tax credit; working with business operators, making operating a business desirable rather than a struggle; cutting red tape to let Ontarians enjoy their occupations; removing the “us and them” kind of feeling that companies feel when they are dealing with government—because we're here to work together; and ensuring that workers are well paid and safe. But we won't go promising one million jobs in a province that has seen successful days on approximately 60% of the number. The PCs are overpromising, and Ontarians deserve better and a more realistic number, especially in light of the impact that the US economy has on us. It's just a fact of life. Job creation, yes; overpromising, no.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I've been sitting here. I could barely hear the member from Kenora–Rainy River over

the heckling. My colleague hasn't even got a word out of his mouth and I can barely hear anything. I'm just wondering if we can have a little order, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You'll notice I did not recognize your colleague as yet.

Before I go to the next speaker, I'll remind everyone that we are to recognize members of the Legislature by their ridings, not their names.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: She was quoting—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I know she was quoting, but it was also said out at times. I respect your comment.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean—Carleton, I would ask you to come to order.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker.

It's an interesting exercise to comment on this proposal which, from its contents, is incorrectly named. It should properly be called the "chasing jobs away act" for its proposals to neuter the province's ability to create opportunity, to chase leading-edge companies and technology out of Ontario, and for its endless attempts to rehash failed right-wing nostrums.

The best way to show Ontarians what an unworkable mishmash of ideological rhetoric this bill is would be to hold as much of it as I can up for scrutiny in the time allotted to me. Now, this non-plan is only an inch deep, so most parts of it won't take all that long to debunk.

Schedule 1 of the bill proposes freezing the annual compensation of public sector employees for two years. In short, to try to enact this section requires the government to rip up legal, binding collective agreements and to try and regulate employees outside the reach and the scope of the government of Ontario. It would be struck down in court, giving rise to larger wage settlements in arbitration. Oh, and by the way, Ontario has already achieved a zero-growth level in wages for the past two years. Speaker, this dog just won't hunt.

Schedule 3 is a corporate tax cut. Well, if firms are not profitable, they don't pay any income tax anyway. And if they are profitable, they can afford to help fund the province that provides them their employees, their resources, their markets and their communities. Ontario's corporate taxes are already lower than anywhere in the industrial heartland of North America, so this PC proposal merely sends more Ontario money offshore to corporate and personal tax havens where it benefits nobody in Ontario ever.

Schedule 2 begins by tossing some 30,000 people out of work and destroying Ontario's world-class renewable energy industry. If a proposal like this had been enacted a century ago, our hydro dams would be private sector profit machines to send ratepayers' money out of the province. If this proposal had been enacted in the 1960s, we would not have our world's best Candu nuclear technology that generates half of our province's electricity

and, by the way, employs 30,000 high-skill, high-value people right here in Ontario.

Just like the recent failed opposition day motion, this proposal represents the energy equivalent of the "yesterday's status quo" that is the hallmark of the ideological diatribes that masquerade as PC Party policy. It kills a "tomorrow" high-value, high-skill renewable energy industry. It puts us back on track to burning coal again. It costs jobs, and it makes Ontario, once again, a net electricity importer—bad idea, bad economics. That boat won't float.

Schedule 4 makes an incorrect allegation about regulation in Ontario. The PCs pull a figure out of thin air, as well as an arbitrary time frame by making an unsubstantiated assertion that Ontario should eliminate one third of its regulations within three years. Speaker, during the eight lost years between 1995 and 2003, the Conservatives had a whole ministry dedicated to this function, and they couldn't meet this target in eight years of government. What they did manage to do was create the conditions that led to the deaths of seven people in Walkerton and to the PC tainted-meat scandal.

When those functions were effectively regulated once again, the problem ceased. This government enacts only those regulations that it needs, and ministers must work to an overall government target of eliminating or consolidating two existing regulations for every new one it must enact. Now, that's responsible government—not this proposal. This cut-regardless-of-the-consequences approach to regulation has been tried and failed. This lead balloon won't fly.

Schedules 5, 6 and 7 wreak the Harris-Eves Tea Party anti-labour havoc that we had in the late 1990s on a 21st-century trade workforce. Our trades need to sharpen their continuing-education edge, and they need to attract talented youth. These proposals, which include abolishing the Ontario College of Trades, would send trades back to the 1950s instead of enabling them to attract and teach talented youth to work in tomorrow's Ontario trades. This idea is a black hole of reactionism.

Schedule 8 presumes a great deal about the will of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan voters and contains no details whatsoever about what difference it would make. It also ignores Ontario's historical business relationship with Quebec and the Great Lakes states. Oh, by the way, that's where about 90% of our trade goes. Schedule 8, as they might say in Stratford, is much ado about little.

Schedule 9, about immigration, is nearly as empty. Clause 1 of schedule 9 is as aspirational as it gets. There's just nothing there. It says we have to attract the number and quality of newcomers to Canada that Ontario needs. Now, that's news. It says the minister will publish a report on the ministry's website. That's action? Come on. Give us a break.

1520

We need Ottawa to get out of the way, take apart its ineffective and expensive citizenship bureaucracy, and let Ontario have the flexibility that Quebec and other provinces do. If the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook

had roasted the feds and said, "Citizenship and Immigration Canada is doing a terrible job," I might have said that was the one thing about the bill that I liked. Prostrating himself and showing his underside to Ottawa doesn't help his credibility.

This is just not a good bill. The parts don't connect. It's a grab bag of old, failed, right-wing slogans and neo-conservative articles of faith that have never worked. This backward march to yesterday's status quo is unworkable law and bad policy. It shows why the PC Party is out of touch with its time and out of touch with the needs and the hopes of Ontario.

Two thumbs down. This does not deserve to pass second reading. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Where to begin?

I'm going to quickly correct a few things that we've just heard about. When we heard that there was a 0% increase amongst wages, I must remind this Legislature that 98% of all managers in Ontario received a wage increase last year in the form of a bonus. When we hear that Ontario has the lowest corporate taxes, I have to correct that statement by saying that when this government passes this additional half per cent, we will have the highest corporate taxes amongst the large provinces in this entire country. We already have the highest payroll taxes. We've seen them double the debt, and we've seen them triple hydro rates so that now we have the highest hydro rates.

Something needs to be done. That's why I stand today to support our leader, Tim Hudak, and his million jobs plan. But let's hear from some people around Ontario, from when we did our pre-budget consultation.

Art said, "Ontario's manufacturing sector has suffered thousands of job losses in the recent past and clearly illustrates the results of lost competitiveness."

All of us were here to listen to Jordan say, "The College of Trades is inhibiting a lot of these contractors from expanding. Realistically, there are challenges with these issues." These are issues that our leader, Tim Hudak, is going to correct through his Million Jobs Act.

Matt from the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce said they "believe it's a key priority for the provincial government to address the fiscal situation. Eliminating the deficit and tackling debt is absolutely critical."

Frank said, "I don't think increasing the cost of gasoline is actually going to help the family budget."

Steve said, "You're right that having a job is the most important pathway out of poverty." He also went on to say, "The fundamental thing is that we need to make sure that the jobs that exist are available, and that they are good jobs, as well."

The mayor of Enniskillen said about hydro, "They continue to be the main reason for losing manufacturing jobs in the area. Something has to be done. To see the bleeding" from these job losses "is heartbreaking, to say the least."

The list goes on and on. My favourite was Liam. You know which Liam I'm referring to: McGuinty. He said that "the bulk of studies show that lowering corporate income taxes has a significant impact on investment."

Here's what Andrea said—not that Andrea, the other Andrea: "The first thing that we urge the government to do and that we hope will make the province prosper economically is to tackle the deficit."

When talking about red tape, Eric said, "It's overwhelming industry."

The list that we all heard goes on and on.

I'll share the time with my fellow colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 158. I will tell you right off the bat that I'll be opposing it, and opposing it aggressively. I have to tell you that I don't doubt the sincerity of the motion or the sincerity of the leader in his desire to create well-paying jobs. I just don't think their plan does that.

When he speaks about the loss of good-paying jobs, many of those good-paying jobs were unionized, something this party has been aggressively attacking for years. It will continue attacking unions for years to come. Those good, well-paying jobs were unionized. And he speaks about good-paying jobs that we have lost. What would he do to replace them? I don't have a clue, and I want to speak to that.

Not once does he talk about the North American Free Trade Agreement; not once. You will recall my good buddy Mulroney with his mellifluous voice talking about the millions of jobs that would be created once this free trade agreement was in place. Where are those jobs? Where have they gone? They left the country and they left North America, and they went into Asia, for the most part. But not once does the leader of the official opposition talk about how those good-paying jobs left North America and left Canada—not once.

We're about to engage with the Europeans in a comprehensive trade and economic agreement, something the Tories are about to institute again. I'm telling you, we're going to lose more good-paying jobs. And I know what your special interest is: It's the multinational corporations. That's your special interest. But not once do you talk about your special interest, friends—not once.

You talk about lowering taxes. It's a spent idea. You talk about lowering corporate taxes. It's spent; it's an old idea. You guys need to move on. Mike Harris gave enough of that. The Liberals gave enough of that because they've helped you with \$4.5 billion. In fact, they proudly say, "We cut corporate taxes," helping you, and they say, "Together on this, we're creating jobs." But we don't see those jobs. They're part-time jobs. They're contract jobs. Your strategies—yours and theirs—have not worked. The jobs are not there. You cannot lower taxes and get the jobs we need. The evidence is clear: It's not there.

You talk about getting rid of bureaucratic red tape. It doesn't work. And we saw, in the 2008 financial fiasco in

America that caused a worldwide fiasco, that it was the elimination of regulations that some of us call red tape. And God bless Canada and that we have a little more red tape than the Americans because it saved us a little more than it saved the Americans. My friends, red tape is not the problemo. A little red tape helped to save our economy from the ravages of what the American financial institutions did.

Lowering corporate taxes will not do it. There is no evidence that the good-paying jobs have arrived as a result—absolutely no evidence. And the Liberals, having helped you out with that, haven't helped at all.

When you talk about the special interest groups, talk about your investor friends, talk about your multinational friends with the big bucks, the pecunia, your champagne capitalists. Talk about those kinds of friends, with whom you meet on a regular basis and with whom you have a very close, close relationship. You never talk about them.

If you want good jobs, think about what New Democrats have proposed. It might help some of you a little bit. But the whole idea of going after job training and saying, "We're going to create 250,000 jobs," a number you pulled out of a hat, is insane. It is utterly insane. It makes absolutely no sense. There is no evidence for that.

Your whole idea of a million jobs strategy is not only fanciful; it's farcical. The invention of such a number makes people think you guys are not fit for the job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Speaker. I commend my colleague from Trinity-Spadina and his passion and theatrics.

I would, with your permission, Speaker, like to directly address the Leader of the Opposition, the MPP for Niagara West-Glanbrook. I take him at his word when he says that he is concerned about job loss and unemployment and, of course, the psychosocial effects that that has on the various communities that are affected. I take him at his word.

1530

I would, however, like to cite that the strategy that the Conservative side, that the opposition is citing, is probably misguided, probably expired ideas and, essentially, recycling of initiatives and programs that have been tried not only in this province but continue to be in effect across the border. When we were seeking to rename this particular act, Bill 158, the Million Jobs Act—so far the brain trust has come up with this phrase of the "killing jobs act" or "chasing jobs away." I thought perhaps it would actually better be named as the "Americanization of Ontario act," because I think if you read this bill, you will see echoes of initiatives that have been tried and have, yes, benefited a certain portion, perhaps the top 5% or 10% or the multinational companies that have been cited earlier—because what this program seeks to do is to freeze, cut, lay off, sell off, deregulate, restructure and abolish so much of the superstructure that makes Ontario great.

What I would say with respect to my honourable colleague the Leader of the Opposition and to his advisers

and to my MPP colleagues is that this is a country, not a corporation. We are citizens, not merely taxpayers. And that distinction, that fine balance, is something that I think the Tea Party Republicans, in their divide-and-conquer, us-and-them mentality, neither recognize or appreciate—but probably strive to blur. It's sort of an ideological pose of privatizing the gains and socializing the losses, and turning everything, whether it's health care, education or infrastructure, into profit centres. That is precisely what has happened in places like Alabama, Wisconsin and Detroit.

There's a word, Speaker, that I think is very important to introduce to the economic debate here, and that is "arbitrage." Originally, it used to mean that you buy gold at this amount in Paris and sell it at a higher rate in London. But unfortunately, there's an arbitrage going on in business throughout the world, whether it's seeking jurisdictions which have weaker union laws, weaker environmental laws, yes, lower taxes, less regulation, less red tape—and all of those things are not an unqualified good.

I think this idea of stopping the gravy train—especially those of us here in the GTA are well familiar with the aspiration that that had, the sloganeering value that that had, but at the end of the day, when all you're seeking to do is freeze, cut, lay off, sell off, deregulate, restructure, abolish or "modernize," that is not, I think, the way forward.

By the way, you really need to read some of the recent speeches and the most recent book and documentary of the honourable Mitt Romney, the expired candidate for the presidency of the United States, and you will see an extraordinary concordance—at your peril, sir—between your plan and Mitt Romney's plan. It's a different age. It's a different mindset. There's a definite technology horizon out there, and we are not, I think, going to be able to go back to that privatize-the-gains, socialize-the-losses, divide-and-conquer strategy.

I commend you for your realization of that on the right-to-work plan. My colleague from Durham, the honourable John O'Toole, was quite right, but I think many, many other issues, you will find, sir, will play themselves out in a similar manner once the election is called, whenever.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: First of all, I just want to get the facts straight for the member from Trinity-Spadina. The facts are that you left the Ontario people with an \$11.3-billion deficit—

Interjection.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: —with your buddies over there; they've got the same amount now. We, as the PCs, when we came in, said we were going to have a zero deficit within the first four years. We did it in three, and we continued on four after that. People want the facts, and they want someone in government who is going to turn it around.

As the critic for economic development, trade and employment, it is my pleasure to join this afternoon's debate

around the Million Jobs Act. For the last 10 years, Ontario has been on the wrong path. The party opposite has used the power of government to reinforce its political advantage, run up the debt and deficit, and has left the public to pay the bill. Putting an end to the shameful status quo begins here and it begins now.

The Million Jobs Act is Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party reminding the party opposite what true leadership is about. Government's most basic responsibility is to create the conditions for business to thrive, for the economy to grow and for families to prosper. The first step is getting the fundamentals right.

Under the Liberals, Ontario's debt has doubled, and our deficit is higher than all the other provinces combined. It's shameful. The government's reckless spending costs us all because interest payments divert precious resources from priorities like great schools and quality health care. Tim Hudak has his priorities straight, and the Million Jobs Act would balance the budget quickly.

Ontario's skills gap robs our economy of \$24 billion every year. Our youth unemployment hovers over 16.5%. That's the reality of 10 years of Liberal government. The people of Ontario deserve better. Ontario's skills gap is the result of government policy being out of step with the reality of the marketplace. This bill would align the training system with the needs of the marketplace and help our young people find good jobs.

Tim Hudak is going to take back this have-not province with his Million Jobs Act and we will be open for business again. The people of Ontario are depending on it.

Past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour, and I'll say this: When the PCs were in, we said we were going to create 725,000 jobs in five years. We created 1.1 million in eight. We're overachievers.

I want to thank Mr. Hudak for your vision and your leadership. I am honoured to support this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To the member from Burlington, I said it twice today and I'll say it again: We're to refer to members of the Legislature by their title and not their name.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to join my leader and my colleagues in debate today to support the Million Jobs Act.

I spoke with my constituency office today and they said to me that the phone calls have never been coming in more fast and furious. People in this province are hurting. They're relying on a political party today to change the direction of this province so people can get back to work, they can pay their hydro bills and they can have a sense of security in the province in which they live. I believe the Million Jobs Act is precisely what they are looking for.

In my brief moment, Speaker, I would like to talk a bit about energy, as the Ontario Progressive Conservative energy critic. We know in our province today that energy is unaffordable, not only for residential consumers but also business consumers. In fact, AMPCO, the Associa-

tion of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, has said, "Our analysis shows that Ontario has the highest industrial rates in North America." They further say, "Ontario not only has the highest delivered rates of all these jurisdictions; the disparity in" these rates "is growing." Speaker, we can't do that anymore. The Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association is also saying the same thing.

They are putting at risk the very thing that makes Ontario a powerhouse in Confederation: jobs. If we can't get our energy rates under control, we're going to continue to lose more jobs. That's why we have a plan, the million jobs plan, to get those people back to work.

I'd like to address very quickly the issue of debt and deficit. It is very clear to me that as the third-largest spending priority in Ontario, the debt and deficit, and servicing it, are going to erode our public services. Earlier today, my colleague Jim McDonnell and I learned that our local hospital, Winchester District Memorial Hospital, will be closing 14 beds. They will lose 10 full-time jobs and they will have to increase their parking at their hospital. That is the real consequence of the Liberal-NDP policies of the last decade.

We need to move on, we need to do better, and we can do it with the million jobs plan put forward by my leader, Tim Hudak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Halton.

1540

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, 9% of my constituents are out of work. Obviously, top-of-mind concerns revolve around jobs, unemployment and the economy. This is where opposition leader Tim Hudak's million jobs law comes in.

In 1995, Tim Hudak and I first ran for election on a promise from Mike Harris to create one million jobs, and that promise became a reality. Fast-forward 18 years: We see another one million people—our friends, our neighbours—without jobs. Again, it's time for Ontario to put people back to work.

Ontario truly is in trouble, both fiscally and economically. To say Ontario's economy has stalled would be an understatement. Heinz, Bick's and Kellogg's need to be lured back. The economy of Ontario is supposedly in recovery since the economic shock of 2008, but it's the slowest and most agonizing rebound since the Depression, with nearly seven years of an unemployment rate above the national average. Poverty, welfare and disability rates have skyrocketed.

These economic, fiscal and political models in Ontario cannot continue forever in their present form. For the sake of coming generations, we can rebuild an Ontario that we can once again be proud of. Without some form of revolutionary change, Ontario may limp along for a while yet; however, the fundamental problems will continue to grow. By continuing irresponsible government taxing, spending, and borrowing, survival could be short-lived. Don Drummond projects a \$411.4-billion debt.

So our best course is to find the wherewithal and the leadership to build something better, as we see in this

legislation, the Million Jobs Act. It will be difficult, not without controversy, but it will be necessary. Believe it or not, government does have a role to play, and it lies in the realm of common sense tax policy, labour policy, energy policy, and addressing the myriad of bureaucratic rules and regulations that suffocate progress. Regrettably, our present government in Ontario has become increasingly dysfunctional, self-serving and, obviously, crushingly expensive. Moreover, it is failing to fulfill its most basic obligations.

We need real jobs, high-tech jobs, capitalizing on the inherent capabilities traditionally found in Ontario's workforce. Tax cuts create jobs. It makes more sense to have money in bank accounts to save, invest or spend as people and businesses themselves see fit.

Constituents continuously tell me they can't keep up with their bills, especially for electricity. Instead of keeping power rates down to help create jobs in the broader economy, this government has chosen to create jobs for people working within the power sector itself.

Colleges Ontario estimates there are 46% fewer tradespeople per capita in Ontario compared to the rest of Canada. The Million Jobs Act will create an apprentice-to-journeyman ratio of one to one and scrap the Ontario College of Trades, the costly bureaucracy that imposes a tax on workers.

My time has run out. Let's get Ontario back to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, and my apologies for recognizing the member as Halton; it should be Haldimand-Norfolk.

The member for Niagara West-Glanbrook, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank all my colleagues for their comments.

Look, just when you hope the NDP is starting to understand the economy, they break my heart every time when I hear those—it's just shattering, and to hear their critic, the member from Kenora, say that a million jobs is too ambitious, that they only want to create half of those jobs, that we don't need them.

I was proud to be part of a PC government that led North American job creation, 1.1 million new jobs to lead this continent, and we can do it again. Look, I know Bob Rae and the NDP—I'll admit it—did create jobs: in New York, in Michigan, in Indiana. I want to create jobs right here in the province of Ontario. I'm proud of my plan, and I'm proud of my team that's going to help deliver that plan and turn our province around. I'm proud that the million jobs plan will have a government that actually sets clear priorities, sticks to them and spends within its means, a government that will get its taxes down and energy rates under control, because I believe that affordable energy is the foundation for industry, to help seniors be able to pay their bills—an energy policy that's going to attract jobs, not chase them away.

I see immigration as an engine for economic growth, to pull us out of the hole and pull us forward; to offer that top student from India, China or Brazil studying at U of T an accelerated path to citizenship, to contribute to our economy, to raise a family here and to create jobs.

I say yes to 250,000 well-paying jobs in the skilled trades: carpenters, electricians, plumbers, precision machine operators, technologists. I want to fill up our rigs, our trains, our boats, our planes and fill up the Internet with Ontario-made goods and services, and sell them across the world. That's my plan.

Speaker, I'm ready. I've got a plan; they don't. I'm ready to lead. I'm ready to bring jobs back to our province. All I've got to say is, let's get going and get this on the road.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We will take the vote at the end of private members' business.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should protect taxpayers from higher property taxes by implementing a comprehensive, long-term solution to reform joint and several liability insurance for municipalities by no later than June 2014, addressing the alarming rise in insurance premiums due to rising litigation and claim costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth-Wellington, you have 12 minutes for your presentation under standing order 98.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Rising municipal insurance premiums must be reined in. Under the Negligence Act, damages can be recovered from any defendant, even if they are found to be only 1% at fault. Municipalities often targeted as insurers of last resort can be on the hook for massive damage awards.

If adopted, this motion will send a clear signal to municipalities: We hear you. It will send a clear message to taxpayers: We respect you. It will say that this House stands ready to support real, comprehensive reform to protect you from rapidly rising insurance premiums.

The current liability model is driving these increases, and leaves the door open to massive damage awards. Facing added risk and increasing costs, insurance premiums must go up. To afford those higher premiums, municipalities often have no choice but to increase taxes or cut services. For taxpayers, this is a lose-lose situation.

Speaker, before I became an MPP, I served as a councillor in North Perth. Even then, our council had to grapple with this issue. Since I was elected to the Legislature, I have spoken up many times for the municipalities I represent.

At the 2012 ROMA/OGRA conference, I supported the town of Minto in a meeting with the Attorney General. Along with many others, we asked for reform. That was two years ago. Last April, I wrote to the Premier on behalf of the municipality of West Perth. We told her how this is affecting us. Again, we called on the government to fix the problem.

I want to read a letter of support endorsed by many municipalities: "If this situation continues, the scaling back on public services in order to limit liability exposure and insurance costs will only continue. Regrettably, it

will be at the expense of the communities we all call home.”

1550

In a resolution from the township of Lake of Bays, Mayor Bob Young said, “It is unfair to ask 444 municipalities in Ontario to carry the lion’s share of a damage award when at minimal fault or to assume responsibility for someone else’s mistake.”

At last count, a total of 187 municipalities across the province have endorsed this motion. I thank them for their overwhelming support.

I would also like to thank those who have given their guidance and advice on this resolution. Thank you to Larry Ryan, Derek Sarluis and Bryce Sibbick from the Frank Cowan Co.; Pat Vanini and Matthew Wilson from AMO; Matt Hiraishi, Doug DeRabbie and Ralph Palumbo from the Insurance Bureau of Canada; and Bill Nelson and Miles Dadson, who are trusted insurance brokers in Perth–Wellington.

Small and rural municipalities, often least able to afford rising premiums, are supporting us. In Perth–Wellington, municipalities including Mapleton, Minto, Perth county, West Perth, North Perth, Perth South, St. Marys, Stratford and Wellington North have passed resolutions supporting my motion.

Municipalities are demanding action, and action is long overdue. In fact, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has been calling on this government to reform the joint and several liability system for years. In 2011, an AMO survey found that municipal liability premiums had increased 22% over five years. At the AMO conference, former Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to ask his Attorney General and Minister of Municipal Affairs to “sit down with you and see how, together, we can address your concerns relating to joint and several liability.” By the way, that was just before the current Premier took over as Minister of Municipal Affairs in 2011. But today, almost three years later, the problem has worsened, and the government has yet to act. Municipal liability reform is still among AMO’s top priorities. We need to know where it stands among the government’s priorities or even if it’s on the list.

In November, I met with representatives from AMO. They stressed the need to reform the joint and several liability model to relieve the burden on municipalities. British Columbia has enacted a form of proportionate liability. Other provinces have also taken action. According to the American Tort Reform Association, 42 American states have undertaken legislative reforms.

Speaker, I want to share with the House a few examples of how municipalities in Ontario have been affected. This year, the city of Brantford’s insurance premiums went up almost 20%, coming in at \$2.3 million. The township of Wellington North faces a 6% hike in its insurance premiums. They were advised to double their liability coverage from \$25 million to \$50 million.

The warden of Renfrew county wrote to me—

Mr. John Yakabuski: A good guy.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —a good guy in Renfrew, yes—“The current situation is not sustainable, and a

long-term solution is required that is beneficial to all parties. This solution is critical to providing future financial stability for municipalities, and action must be taken now so that a proactive approach can be achieved and a crisis averted.”

Insurers have also expressed concerns. In November, I met with representatives from the Frank Cowan Co., who stressed the urgency of getting the system under control as soon as possible. I was told that many would say we are in a municipal insurance crisis—I repeat: a municipal insurance crisis. I was told we need sustainability and stability in the insurance marketplace.

I want to read a letter of support I received from Ralph Palumbo, vice-president, Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada: “In recent years, municipalities have seen a dramatic increase in their insurance premiums, primarily due to rising litigation and claim costs. Unfortunately, these cost increases are absorbed by ratepayers in the form of higher residential and commercial property taxes.

“IBC welcomes the debate on the implications of joint and several liability on Ontario municipalities.”

We’ve heard many examples highlighting the need for reform. In 2004, a woman drove her sister and three friends down a rural road dividing the city of Oshawa and the township of Scugog. Believing a car was coming at her from the opposite direction, the driver veered into a ditch. She lost control, struck a culvert and flipped her car. Tragically, the driver and her sister suffered serious injuries, leaving them quadriplegic.

The sisters filed a lawsuit against Oshawa and Scugog. While the driver was found one-third responsible because she was speeding, the municipalities were assigned the majority of fault at one third each. The judge concluded that the road presented an unreasonable risk of harm and should have had a painted line, even though the Ontario manual of uniform traffic control did not require one.

The case cost the municipalities, their taxpayers and insurers more than \$20 million. To be sure, no one would deny anyone the lifelong medical care they need. But it is not fair for municipalities, where they took every reasonable step to ensure public safety, to pay up when a massive and unexpected award for damages comes their way.

We need reform that recognizes that. We need reform that is based on fairness to all concerned. Joint and several liability insurance reform is, I recognize, very complex. It involves existing provincial laws, it involves years of legal precedent, and it concerns many competing interests. All of these must be considered. That is why this motion does not dictate a specific avenue of reform. It is not intended to. The government needs to listen to the advice it has received from AMO, from municipalities, from insurers, from the legal profession and from its own public service. Solutions are not straightforward, but we know they are possible.

No longer can the government point to complexity as an excuse to keep putting off meaningful change. We need to see the government give this issue the attention it deserves. That is the reason for this resolution. It is my

understanding that the Ministry of the Attorney General has held ongoing discussions around reform. I am encouraged to hear that the ministry staff recently reached out to the legal community and have been working with insurers and other stakeholders to find a solution that will work for Ontario. But after all this consultation, action is overdue.

It is time for this government finally to make this a priority. On this issue, and so many others, municipalities want to see action. They are tired of bringing their concerns to the government and receiving in return little more than an excuse or a pat on the head. I call on the government to take all the feedback they already have and use it to bring about real reform. I call on them to do it now. I hope that all members from all parties will come together today to represent their communities. I asked my colleagues to support us, including those from Mississauga, Ottawa, Hamilton and St. Catharines. All have endorsed this motion.

Municipalities and taxpayers cannot afford further delays. They cannot continue waiting on their insurance premiums to continue to skyrocket. I ask for the support of this House, and I look forward to questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll be supporting this bill and I will—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Some things we agree on.

I am very happy to send this bill to committee because I am persuaded or convinced that there will be different kinds of opinions that will come forward that will educate, possibly enlighten and help to deal with this particular problem. There is simply no doubt that the lawsuits facing municipalities that relate to fire, police, leisure services, snowplowing, drinking water, road maintenance, bridges and culverts—it's a long list that brings many, many different problems and lawsuits to municipalities, and that brings additional costs to municipalities. That is a concern to municipalities, to be sure, and it's a concern to the property taxpayers and renters who pay huge amounts of taxes as well, because they see their costs going up each and every year, and sometimes they don't see the concomitant benefits that come with those rising taxes. So it's a huge concern.

1600

I want to hear from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, because we know that they have raised concerns about this. Clearly, lawyers, when there is an individual problem, will go after the municipality because there's more money to be made than going after a homeowner, and even if the homeowner has or 99% of the responsibility and the city 1%, they'll go after the city, because that's where the money is. We understand that. But we have to worry about how we protect individuals from lawsuits that could potentially be very, very high, assuming you could squeeze money out of homeowners if someone went after the homeowner and not the city. So

it's a concern with how we protect some of those individual rights.

The other concern that we need to worry about is: Does this have any other implications for other laws and/or other citizens who might be affected by merely changing this particular Negligence Act, which deals with the reform of joint and several liability insurance? So there may be implications if we move in this area that could affect other laws and could affect citizens in an adverse way, and I would be very interested in listening to people who come in from the community to see what they have to say.

But I wanted to make reference to something that a government did in 1995, and some of you will remember that because you were here. I know that the Leader of the Opposition was here in 1995. I know that the member from Wellington—Halton Hills was here in 1995, and he would remember. My friend from Timmins—James Bay was here and, of course, I was here, and one or two other Liberals, but not many others. You'll remember the who-does-what committee, headed by one of my favourite Tories, David Crombie.

I like him a lot; I think that he's a good Tory. He's a red Tory. He produced this report that talked about who does what and who should pay for what, and as a result of that report, 30% of the education taxes were uploaded, taken out, and a commensurate amount of social services, the Tories argued, would be downloaded to the cities across Ontario. Mike Harris, at the time, and his minister argued that this was an even swap.

Those of us who were in the know never felt that it was an even swap. Speaker, you were there at the city in 1995, I think. I know that you and various Conservative members, including Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong, were concerned about this uneven swap, and he understood that it would not be—and the member from Peterborough, when you were a city councillor, you, I'm sure, felt the effects of that. But the point of that exercise was not only to amalgamate cities, which the Tories argued would save money—and we have seen no evidence for that except the opposite. The other effect of downloading services to the municipalities caused tremendous fiscal problems for each and every municipality across Ontario, and they just don't know what to do. And so the only problem that we've got is that we've shifted the load onto the municipalities—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Durham, I can't hear you, so I don't know what you're saying.

We've shifted the responsibilities onto municipalities, and now, of course, to make up for that lack of balance, they've got to raise taxes.

Remember, they downloaded public housing, which is close to a \$1-billion cost, social housing—the only jurisdiction in the world that has downloaded public housing to the municipalities. No one else does it in the civilized world. So they've got to deal with that huge amount of infrastructure problems from property taxes. That's what we have given them as part of that swap.

I just wanted to remind the member from Perth–Wellington that we recognize the problems municipalities have, but would that some of you would make the link between what you did in 1995 and simply take a little modicum of responsibility and say publicly, “Yes, maybe we made a mistake.” If I were to hear that, I wouldn’t feel so bad; but for you not to acknowledge that you have created this fiscal imbalance and this problem for municipalities and for the taxpayer, it just annoys me a little bit.

With respect to this bill, I’d send it to committee. Let’s get people to talk about it and see what they feel, but I think they’re on the right track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It’s a great honour, as always, for me to stand in my place and provide some comments and thoughts with respect to this particular matter that’s being discussed here today.

I want to begin, Speaker, by offering my congratulations to the member from Perth–Wellington. I did have the chance to hear his remarks and his comments with respect to his private member’s bill. Of course, I also had the chance to hear the member from Trinity–Spadina speak about this bill. I want to echo at least the first half of what I heard from the member from Trinity–Spadina with respect to the importance, at this stage of second reading, of supporting this particular private member’s bill to make sure that it does get to committee so that there can be some additional examination and analysis brought to bear. It is obviously an issue that has caused, I suppose, some concern with respect to what’s taking place with our municipal partners across the province of Ontario. I know that was referenced in remarks made by both the member from Perth–Wellington and the member from Trinity–Spadina.

Earlier this week, I, along with many of my colleagues from this side of the House, had the opportunity to attend the ROMA/OGRA conference here in Toronto. I was privileged to have the opportunity to speak, on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, with close to 30 delegations from municipalities across the province. I was also in attendance during what we like to call the bear pit session to hear some of the questions that came from the floor. It won’t come as a surprise to most in the chamber right now, and perhaps many watching at home, that municipal leaders from across the province have expressed a desire to continue to work with the Attorney General and our government and all members on all sides of this House to try to come to a resolution on this matter, a matter that is, as I said a second ago, causing some angst and some concern within the municipal sector.

So I do, as I say, want to congratulate the member from Perth–Wellington for coming forward with this measure and this proposal today. As the member from Trinity–Spadina said, I think this is the kind of matter that deserves greater discussion and greater analysis, and I hope that it will be supported by members on all sides.

The other thing I would mention is that in those delegations, in those conversations that I had with folks

from municipalities representing the north, the south, the east and the southwest of this wonderful province that we call home, there was broad recognition that under the leadership of the current Attorney General and current Premier, there have been some very fruitful ongoing conversations about exactly what needs to occur here to make sure that we get it right.

Now, the member from Trinity–Spadina did talk a little bit about some of the history from further back, a number of years ago in the mid- to late 1990s, about how certain of these decisions were made by previous governments that perhaps impact the situation today. I take the member from Trinity–Spadina at his word. Obviously, that predates me as someone who has only served in this Legislature as the MPP for Vaughan for about 17 or 18 months. Having said all of that, in terms of moving forward, Speaker, I think it is important that we have a comprehensive discussion in the chamber today around this particular matter and that we continue to work together on this. This is one of those issues that from time to time come forward in this chamber, that takes a little bit less of a partisan tone, which is good news. I know that our municipal partners from right across the province certainly want to understand and want to have that confidence that we are taking this matter seriously.

1610

But as I was saying a second ago, there was fairly broad recognition, from the conversations that I had at ROMA/OGRA, that our government is moving in the right direction, that we are listening, that we are being responsive; that the Attorney General, in particular, is working hard, and his officials are working extremely hard, to make sure that we strike the right balance on something that is complicated, taking into account that there are examples from other provinces across Canada about how to move forward on this, taking into account that other jurisdictions south of the border deal with this in particular ways, and making sure that we don’t make any rash decisions, that we don’t do anything that perhaps is a bit of a knee-jerk reaction to a problem that has existed for a little while.

From my perspective, there seemed to be a fairly broad willingness on the part of our municipal partners to work with us; to continue to exhibit the kind of patience that’s needed; to want to work with the Attorney General and our government and members from all three caucuses, from all three parties represented here in the chamber; to collectively roll up our sleeves; to make sure that as we move forward, we come forward with proposals and ideas and solutions; that they won’t find themselves back in a situation, and they won’t find themselves being confronted by unintended consequences; and that they will find a way and we will find a way, working with them—in a very non-partisan, constructive way, hopefully—to come forward with a solution and to come forward with ideas that are sustainable.

There is probably nothing that’s more frustrating than for other levels of government—partners, stakeholders,

let's call them—from across all sectors to see proposals and solutions emanate from this building and then realize a month later, six months later, two years later, we're right back here again; we're right back to basics, trying to solve a problem that we'd hoped to solve in the past.

I'll wrap up my comments by once again repeating that I congratulate the member from Perth–Wellington. I hope that others will join with me and the member from Trinity–Spadina in supporting this initiative. I look forward to the rest of the debate and discussion that I'm sure will take place over the course of the rest of the afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: With pride, I rise to talk to the bill from my colleague from Perth–Wellington.

This past week, I sat in on approximately 35 delegations from different municipalities, and the message was always the same. We were talking about municipalities that are in trouble, municipalities that are receiving a lot of feedback, a lot of flak, from their residents about their property taxes, which are just escalating out of control.

They mentioned issues of cuts in funding from this government, four years of \$25 million each, the OMPF funding of \$100 million, from a government that sees fit to cancel a gas plant at a cost of over \$1 billion, but they're attacking municipalities who just have no choice but to either cut services or pass it on to their property taxes.

They talked about policing costs escalating, a contract that they had nothing to do with. The McGuinty–Wynne government negotiated the rates and just simply passed them down to them. In my riding of SD&G, we're talking around a million-dollar increase in policing costs alone. Those are huge additions.

Hydro rates, policing costs—joint and several liability was one of the other issues. Their insurance rates over the last number of years have escalated. I know, myself, as mayor of South Glengarry, we were in court a number of times, drawn in because of the threat—really, at no fault, and, in almost all cases, proven that way in court. But our insurance company was in there because there was a threat of hundreds of thousands of dollars of liability. Because we were the municipality, 1% could bring us in.

Those are costs that we've heard about for years and years, and this government has been talking about it, but I guess we're getting tired of talking about it. We need action, because these insurance rates have almost doubled over the last 10 years, and it's hitting the bottom line. There are numerous cases where we have to get into things. Everybody remembers the original pledge by this Liberal government to freeze insurance rates. Of course, we've seen what happened, so we're not expecting a lot of work on this.

I think I hear a lot of talk from the member from Trinity–Spadina on the downloading and uploading. That was revenue-neutral. I have to remind him that, at that time, our school board costs were around 60% of the tax bill. That was taken away from us, so there were issues.

We know we need to look ahead. We need some changes that are going to make a difference, because the property taxes are getting out of hand.

The other thing I heard loud and clear was, people are getting tired of seeing bankruptcies and companies moving, and a big part of that is the cost of doing business in Ontario. Everybody knows that when costs of business go up, businesses close and jobs go down. They're wanting help and they're desperate to see help.

I know many of my colleagues want to talk on this issue, so I'll pass my time on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Hamilton—

Miss Monique Taylor: Mountain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion that's before us today.

The motion speaks to problems municipalities are experiencing with the rising cost of their insurance premiums. At the end of the day, we know who pays the bill for that, and it's families, who are already feeling the pressure on their wallets. They know very well that rising insurance premiums are having a direct impact on the costs that they face every single day. Normally, they see it on their own auto insurance, but others are seeing it when they open their property tax bill, with that increase, because that money has to go somewhere.

Municipalities have spoken out about the effect that these rising insurance costs are having on their ability to deliver services that people rely on. In 2011, AMO reported that the municipal liability premium costs increased 22% from 2007 to 2011. That year, they paid a total of \$155 million for insurance and \$85 million for liability premiums. That's just for the insurance; that doesn't include the legal fees, settlements and court-mandated awards.

Municipalities already have to contend with the cost of the responsibilities that these governments and the previous Conservative government downloaded upon them. This motion won't help municipalities deal with those costs, but it does give the Legislature an opportunity to discuss the important rising cost of insurance.

Joint and several liability is a very complex issue, and I would note that the motion before us today is opposed by many in the legal profession. They voiced their concerns to the Attorney General after it was reported in January of this year that he was considering changes to the Negligence Act, one of those being that there had been a lack of consultation, and more time was needed to do meaningful consultation. Speaker, those concerns need to be heard, but this discussion has to happen.

Municipalities are paying more for insurance than they are for items like bridge and culvert maintenance and street lighting. Why is it costing us so much? It's because of the joint and several liability they have with respect to claims and the possibilities of being liable for huge costs when they're only partially at fault.

I called the risk management division in Hamilton and had him explain it to me in terms that I understand, and I do get it now. He told me to think about it this way: Two trucks are driving toward each other on a country road. They collide and one veers off and hits a tree on a municipal easement. The judge in this case has an award of \$5 million and finds the municipality 1% at fault. The driver, who is significantly at fault, only has \$1 million of liability coverage. Thanks to joint and several liability, the municipality is on the hook for the remaining \$4 million.

This is an issue that municipalities would like to see addressed. It has also been a long-standing concern for them. They want a change to joint and several liability laws that would provide a proportionate liability, and they would pay the percentage that they were actually responsible for in any lawsuit.

Like I said, Speaker, I will be supporting this motion. I found it very interesting that this conversation was brought up. I myself, as an MPP, found it very educational for me, and what happens with municipalities and how those insurance costs vary for municipal insurance, and what that does to the taxpayers' pockets, because municipalities are always the deep-pocketed ones. Well, it's not really the municipality where those pockets are deep. It's the taxpayer who is always feeling the heat at the end of the day—and to think that there's no cap on insurance premiums that a person could be awarded. In that case, it just puts the city on the hook for any amount of money if they're 1% at fault.

Thank you for the time to allow me to speak to this important matter. As I said, I will be supporting it and I look forward to hearing other debates.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's been enjoyable listening to the debate today, but I am a little perplexed by the party opposite. I always think that there are opportunities to build bridges in this House to actually do something, and I actually have started to understand the gaps between each of the parties around the economy, around city building and around the fairness of municipalities. I don't have any issue with this, particularly. Joint severance is something that we're working on with ROMA, and I think there are solutions that are emerging. I think this is a fairly harmless piece of legislation. I think it reinforces a process that all members of this House see as useful.

But it's been interesting, because as I listen to these things, they are indicative of how we understand the economy. This bill, and the other one presented by one of the members earlier, explains to me how—we often joke that it's hard to find a political party to support sometimes if you're actually a thinking person who has a critical view. As many of you know, I was a big fan of Brian Mulroney because of free trade and the tax reforms that he did. I think a lot of the wealth in this country—as you know, I agree with Jim Flaherty on HST reform,

because it took eight and a half billion dollars of cost out of our economy, that we, as governments, were able to see.

But I now understand the problem. As my friend John O'Toole said, I was the keynote speaker in 2010 to the Progressive Conservative—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would remind the minister to refer to ridings, not names.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friend from Durham knows that I was a guest of the member from Newmarket–Aurora and gave the keynote speech to the Progressive Conservative annual policy convention, largely because of Frank, my friend from Newmarket–Aurora.

It's interesting to me, because what I'm noticing—and this is something that I think is an interesting discussion if we don't want to be partisan for a sec. Municipalities are important, but how do they grow their tax base to deal with issues like joint and separate severances?

Well, what are the problems in the economy? One of the problems in the economy is lazy capital.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm very serious, if you're interested in a non-partisan conversation. I listened carefully to the Leader of the Opposition; I wouldn't mind the same in return. I'll talk to the member from Cambridge, who seems to be interested in this.

So we have a problem, as you'll know, coming from Cambridge. In that municipality, one of its big risks isn't this, it's risk-tolerant capital. One third of our GDP right now is sitting in banks. There's nothing I'm hearing right now that deals with trying to lower the effective tax rate on risk capital—not the corporate tax rate, but if you actually reduced the effective rate of risk capital. What would that do, Mr. Speaker? Well, that would mean that small businesses would be able to grow, they estimate, at about twice the rate. Why is that important? Because 5% of companies right now are generating 50% of our jobs. Those 440,000 jobs that we talk about aren't created by manufacturing or agriculture, they're created by small, innovative start-up businesses in new materials, engineering, new fuels, information technology, new management systems, risk capital. That's the new economy.

One of the challenges for the industrial economy—and this is where I disagree with some of my friends in the third party. Let's take Hamilton as an example: We keep on hearing about manufacturing jobs. Pittsburgh makes more steel today than it ever has in its history. Pittsburgh makes more steel than it ever has before. But Pittsburgh only has two steel plants today and only 300 people working in them; 25 years ago, Pittsburgh had 104 steel plants and 243,000 people working in them.

I would ask the party opposite, given the two motions today, what is your position on manufacturing? Do you not understand that advanced manufacturing is growing, that the reason we make more automobiles and we're the largest automobile manufacturer with 150,000 fewer people is because that is the new economy?

When it comes to joint severance, when it comes to these financial risks—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would just like to know if the Minister of Transportation could actually get back to the motion that's before the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: When it comes to—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, why don't you answer the question?

When it comes to joint severances and the other challenges, we are finally uploading health and social services and things that shouldn't be. These kinds of risks, of which this is one—the member from Huron-Bruce, it's important. You need a strong tax base to do this. What is your position as a party on manufacturing?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the minister to speak through the Chair, please.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What it has to do with it is, it has to do with—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think you got a sore point.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, absolutely.

It has to do with the idea that, without strong economies, there is no resilience.

As I said, again, there's not much to debate, Mr. Speaker, in this particular motion because we agree with it. It's already well in progress. We're working with AMO and ROMA to a solution.

The challenge is, how do you secure the financial security and tax base of our municipalities? If you want to do that, you need a steady pipe of infrastructure. We've gone from \$3 billion to \$14 billion. What does that mean? That means 1.1% more GDP growth, if only the federal government would match us. For all of these communities—the party opposite was at 0.25%, as their federal cousins are. That loses us, over the next 50 years, about \$7 trillion in revenue. It means that the average Ontario family—thank you, Mr. Speaker; it was a pleasure.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague from Perth-Wellington. I want to thank him for moving forward with this motion.

I was fortunate, as were many other members of our caucus, to attend the ROMA/OGRA conference this week. The conference is a great opportunity to talk to municipal leaders as they come and discuss some of the pressures they have in the municipal sector. I think it's very important that we sit and listen to some of their concerns because, as legislators, we can make decisions that directly impact the property tax bill.

Certainly, one of the things that I heard about loud and clear at the conference was the OPP billing reform, where the government has made a complete disaster of

the process, basically going back to the drawing board after a year. Policing costs were a hot-button issue at ROMA/OGRA, but many other municipal officials talked to me about this issue of the need for reform of joint and several liability for municipalities.

There's no question that municipalities across Ontario welcome this motion and were very clear that they expect the three parties to co-operate and to get this passed. As the former municipal affairs critic for the party, I too have met with AMO on this issue. We heard some numbers from earlier speakers. I'm not going to revisit those numbers, but I know, as a former municipal politician, a former mayor of Brockville—and some of the municipal officials who now are MPPs—we know the challenge of balancing a budget, particularly when dealing with costs like insurance premiums that we have no control over.

In my riding of Leeds-Grenville, there are 13 municipalities. I want to thank the town of Gananoque's mayor, Erika Demchuk, for a letter I received at the constituency office today. One of those municipalities, the township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal—I was with Mayor Bill Sloan this weekend at a fundraising event for the Food For All Food Bank. I want to take a moment to read from the letter Mayor Sloan sent to the Attorney General regarding what he calls "the punishing impact of joint and several liability on municipalities."

Mayor Sloan wrote, "If this situation continues, the scaling back on public services in order to limit liability exposure and insurance costs will only continue. Regrettably, it will be at the expense of the communities we call home."

Now, Edwardsburgh/Cardinal is a township where, last year, they opened a brand new Ingredion Centre arena in the beautiful village of Cardinal. It was a \$6.3-million project—a huge undertaking for Mayor Sloan and his council. I know it's projects like the Ingredion Centre that he's talking about when he talks about the challenges that municipalities are facing.

I know some of my other colleagues want to speak to this motion. I want to give them ample time, but I want to thank the member for Perth-Wellington for putting this important issue on the floor today.

1630

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to express my support for the resolution brought forward by my friend and colleague the member for Perth-Wellington, with respect to calling upon the government to solve the problem of joint and several liability. He's calling for the government to undertake reforms to ensure that municipalities don't have to struggle with ever-escalating insurance premiums.

When I think of the member for Perth-Wellington, who has done an outstanding job in this Legislature since he was first elected to the House in October 2011—

Applause.

Mr. Ted Arnott: He sure does deserve our applause for the work that he does. He is solid. He's someone that

his constituents can count on. He is trusted by his constituents, and he has earned that trust through the years, through his public service, even before he came here, for all the things he was involved with, including municipal council for many years. He is very persistent when there is an issue that is brought to his attention that he knows needs to be addressed, and he has demonstrated that with this particular resolution.

I also want to give credit to his staff, some of whom I've worked with in the past: Stephen Yantzi, Sara Cleland, Martin Dendekker, Lindsay Harwood and Vivian Jarvis, who perform outstanding work on behalf of all the constituents in Perth–Wellington, and I know that Randy is fortunate to have them to support his work here.

Of course, this resolution speaks to the need to respond to a concern that has been brought forward by, I think, over 100 municipalities in the province of Ontario and AMO. Municipalities are now paying \$35 million more in insurance premiums than they were just four years ago as a result of some of these massive awards that we've talked about during the course of this debate. We know that AMO's 2011 municipal insurance survey demonstrated that total municipal liability insurance costs were approximately \$85.6 million, up 22.2% from 2007, and we know that the only way for municipalities to deal with increasing premiums is to raise property tax rates and/or cut services, which we don't want to see, obviously.

In 2011, we know that the Premier made a commitment to further discussions on reform, but really, no action has been taken to protect taxpayers and municipalities. The Attorney General has made a public commitment to set up a task force, but nothing has been done.

I quickly want to make reference to an article that appeared in the Wellington Advertiser, a very important newspaper in our area. It's an endorsement of this resolution. It says that the newspaper is very "happy to see a private member's bill by Perth–Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece that aims to reform joint and several liability provisions in law. In essence, if numerous parties were sued, it is currently the one with deepest pockets that pays the bill—often despite a finding of minimal responsibility." It goes on and on.

I'd like to continue this debate, but I know that we have another speaker from our party who wants to participate, so I'm going to leave it at that. But I would encourage all members of this House to support this important resolution today to address an important concern of municipalities in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today in support of this ballot item brought forward by my colleague from Perth–Wellington.

In Ontario the status quo is not an option. Municipalities need a more appropriate form of liability insurance. Many jurisdictions around the world have limited their exposure to the rule of joint and several liability. Some

jurisdictions have even moved to a proportionate liability model.

Under the current joint and several liability model of the Negligence Act of 1990, insurance premiums for municipalities have increased by \$35 million in the last four years. Medium-sized municipalities, similar to the town of East Gwillimbury in my riding, with a population of 24,000 people, have seen an average increase of 35% in liability insurance premiums. And who ends up bearing the cost? We know that it's the property taxpayers and the people of the community. We know that people in some communities spend more on insurance than they do for their library. In another county, for every \$2 spent on snowplowing, another \$1 is spent on insurance. These costs are outrageous when they are compared with the result of the increasing cost of insurance.

What we are here today to look at is the inability of this government to provide good governance. They have known for some time—through AMO and the other municipalities and the various organizations that have come forward and said, "Enough is enough."

All we have heard is that the Attorney General is putting together a group. I don't know whether that's the 37th or the 38th that the Premier is counting in her advisory groups, but it's time to do more than have that. We need action. We need to save the municipalities and our taxpayers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth–Wellington, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Vaughan, Hamilton Mountain, Stormont–Dundas–Glengarry, Leeds–Grenville, Wellington–Halton Hills and York–Simcoe.

I'd like to address my last comments to the Minister of Transportation. The reason there are billions of dollars of capital sitting in bank accounts is because people are afraid to invest in Ontario over the way you guys are running this province.

Anyway, I would also like to thank two members of the Insurance Bureau of Canada for attending today: Matt Hiraishi and Doug DeRabbie, who are sitting over here.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is simply a motion to get the government doing something. For three years, at least, I've been hearing about this issue, and my constituents, my municipalities in my riding have been asking me, "When is it going to happen?" The Attorney General and others have said they're working on it and working on it, yet nothing seems to come along.

We cannot stand these large lawsuits. It is hard on the taxpayers and municipalities who have to come up with the extra funds, and also the insurance companies have to have enough funds in their accounts to pay for these things. So what happens? Our insurance rates go up—again, a cost to the taxpayer.

I thank you all for your support on this resolution. I hope that we can see some real progress in the days to come and get this job done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (POST-TRAUMATIC
STRESS DISORDER), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(TROUBLE DE STRESS
POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 73, standing in the name of Ms. DiNovo.

Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 67, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member would like—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

MILLION JOBS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LA CRÉATION
D'UN MILLION D'EMPLOIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 158, An Act to promote job creation in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this item as a vote after the private members' business.

MUNICIPALITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Pettapiece has moved ballot item number 75, private members' notice of motion number 58.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1640 to 1645.

MILLION JOBS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LA CRÉATION
D'UN MILLION D'EMPLOIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 158, An Act to promote job creation in Ontario.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hollyday, Douglas C.
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.

Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
DeLaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Forster, Cindy
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 53.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please.

The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1650.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Haltoun Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Haltoun	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
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Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
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Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonnell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
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Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
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